

THE NORMAL HOMOSEXUAL IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA: NEW
QUEER GEOGRAPHIES

by

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ABSTRACT

In the United States, from whence much of Euroamerican queer theorizing stems, the radical heritage of the gay and lesbian movement has been dealt a serious blow by the emergence of a "new gay politics" that aims simply to secure a place at the table for the "good gay" citizen. Thus a line between the normal and the queer has been conceptually entrenched. The maintenance of such a binary is problematic because it betrays the underpinnings of queer theory. It also limits the ways in which we understand queer normalizations as they have taken place in various contexts around the globe over the last decade. There is a worldwide (though sporadic and diffuse) trend towards greater recognition of human rights for sexual minorities at the national scale. Further, the purported economic benefits of gay-friendliness have given rise to official pink tourism marketing strategies. This thesis examines the validity of the queer-normal divide outside the heated context of the United States by considering the cultural politics of homosexuality in South Africa.

In 1996, South Africa became the first country in the world to constitutionally affirm homosexuals' rights. Since then, the state has made gay-friendliness a central facet of tourism marketing strategies at both the local and national scales. It is thus officially normal to be queer in post-apartheid South Africa. Utilizing archival and qualitative methods, I have examined expressions of gay and lesbian culture and politics in the country and found neither the straightforward appropriation of queerness by the state or market nor a resistant queer politics outside their purview. Queer theorists within and beyond geography are used to theorizing from a position of exclusion just as scholars engaged in feminist and anti-racist studies are. But since the queer and the normal coexist in South Africa, I conclude that the tendency to dismiss spaces of inclusion as inconsequential sites of study renders our analyses of the nature and extent of space available to identity politics struggles partial. As such, I suggest that those working on geographies of sexualities might usefully explore the notion of a queer geopolitics.

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PREFACE

The personal lives of researchers often play a serendipitous role in their choice of research topics. My selection of an object of study for my doctoral work is a case in point. As a young, queer-identified undergraduate, I participated in a study abroad course in Zimbabwe in 1995. It so happened that my tenure there coincided with the first forays into the public realm of the country's only gay and lesbian organization (Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe, or GALZ) and, in response, the beginnings of what has become a long-standing anti-gay campaign by the still-reigning Zimbabwean head of state Robert Mugabe. At the same time, I learned of a very different situation unfolding next door in South Africa as that nation was then debating the inclusion of "sexual orientation" in its new constitution's Equality Clause. Thus my interest in gay and lesbian politics in southern Africa was born. And it was an interest that stayed with me until it came time to decide on a research project as a postgraduate several years later. At that point, I had also become intrigued by queer theory's recent preoccupation with the apparent normalization and mainstreaming of homosexuality in the United States. Thus an interest in exploring the way in which queer normalization played out in a "non-western" context was born.

When formulating the shape that this project would take, I engaged in close readings of the literature on both queer normalization and queer globalization and these explorations led me to set out on a search for findings along particular lines. In relation to the former literature, it seemed to me that the firm binary being drawn between the normal and the queer precluded the likelihood of re-appropriation. And the latter literature's emphasis on the resilience of "traditional" and/or "hybridized" same-sex expressions of identity beyond the west led me to hope that I might find a subversive

South African cultural politics even though homosexuality is officially normal there. So I set out with the intention of conducting in-depth ethnographic studies of some normalized post-apartheid queer spaces to look for evidence of a still subversive queer politics under the sheen of normalcy. But the results of such studies are not what the chapters that follow convey. Rather, what they illuminate are the reasons why I now know that my original research plan was a crucially flawed one and what this means for queer studies in the face of homosexuality's normalization.

Having struck out from Vancouver to South Africa looking to uncover another reality of a gay and lesbian politics gone mainstream, another reality that might resurrect our faith in the subversive power of queering, I have not returned with lessons *about* this "other" place. Instead, what I offer in this work is a view *from* South Africa. And less obviously, though equally directly, I offer a view from Singapore, a place to which I first went on my way to Cape Town, returned to between trips to South Africa and in which I currently reside.

My initial travels between South Africa and Singapore made me aware that there is a new geopolitics of homosexuality. This statement is elaborated at length in chapter 1. But suffice to say here that while queer studies has been primarily concerned with the US context, a context in which claims to normalcy emanating within gay and lesbian circles have largely fallen on deaf ears within the political sphere, many other nation-states around the globe have officially embraced homosexuals through various modes of political and economic enfranchisement. It may seem strange that I came upon this insight only after I left Canada as it is indeed one of these officially tolerant nation-states. But while living in Canada, though I had frequently come across its citation along with

European states such as the Netherlands and Belgium as gay-friendly, I had not realized the scope of change globally.

In tacking back and forth between Singapore, South Africa and occasionally Canada, it became clear that the dynamics of official tolerance towards homosexuals was being played out in very different ways in each of these states. It also became clear that reliance upon the terms of the normalization debates raging within Anglo-American queer theory did not adequately equip me to study these developments. Whereas a line between appropriation and resistance is commonly drawn within literature addressing the normalization of homosexuality, it began to seem to me that this divide did not fit. In the chapters that follow, my aim therefore is to queer queer theory. That is, I engage in close readings of the normalization debates and of various facets of gay and lesbian cultural politics in post-apartheid South Africa and, through them, I contend that events that easily lend themselves to interpretation as straightforward appropriations of alterity of hegemonic institutions can also be read differently. In other words, I will not discuss what gay and lesbian cultural politics in South Africa *is*. Rather, I will set out the reasons why I think it still has the potential to *do* and why we need a more ambivalent notion of “queer” to begin to understand its workings in contexts of tolerance.

Acknowledgements

As this thesis is the culmination of an intellectual journey that has grown out of and required much travel, I thus have gratitude to express across several locales.

In Vancouver, I am grateful to my advisory committee. My supervisor, Derek Gregory, has taught me an enormous amount from the extraordinary example he sets as someone who pursues scholarship as not only a committed but also a creative enterprise. More specifically, I thank him for his insight into what this project is and tries to do. Jennifer Hyndman, Gerry Pratt, and Juanita Sundberg have offered invaluable encouragement and advice whenever it was needed throughout my tenure at UBC. Additionally, I appreciate the extremely hospitable place to work that Jennifer provided me with at a crucial final stage of writing. I have also gained much from my contemporaries in the graduate program. In addition to their friendship, I thank Alison Mountz for generous mentorship and Eric Olund for being an engaged interlocutor.

At the University of Cape Town, Sue Parnell assisted greatly in facilitating my stay. At an early, formative stage of my research, she also assured me of the value of asking different questions. This is a lesson that has had an obvious imprint on the pages that follow. At the University of the Witwatersrand, Anthony Manion of the Gay and Lesbian Archives was an extremely helpful archivist. I also wish to thank him along with Teresa Dirsuweit for their friendship during my time in Johannesburg.

In Singapore, where most of this dissertation was penned and the place that I now call home, Tim Bunnell, Shirlena Huang, Lisa Law, and James Sidaway welcomed me into their vibrant department at the National University of Singapore. I eagerly look forward to further involvement there.

Many people have provided close readings and constructive criticisms of various written works that have come together in this thesis. They include Clive Barnett, Michael Brown, Vincent Delcasino, Gill Hart and Dereka Rushbrook. I thank them for their encouragement.

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Chapter one

Whither queerness?

Alan and Rudy's relationship seemed closer, or at least more multilayered, than Alan and Lawrence's. Lawrence concluded that Alan's penis scheme must have finally found a taker.

It got Lawrence to thinking. From an evolution standpoint, what was the point of having people around who were not inclined to have offspring? There must be some good, and fairly subtle reason for it.

The only thing he could work out was that it was groups of people – societies – rather than individual creatures, who were now trying to out-reproduce and/or kill each other, and that, in a society, there was plenty of room for someone who didn't have kids as long as he was up to something useful.

-Neal Stephenson, *Cryptonomicon*

[W]hen a new situation, a new alliance formulates itself, it may demand that you should translate your principles, rethink them, even extend them.

-Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*

Queer theory escapes definition. Initially rooted in psychoanalysis and literary theory, it has long since transgressed the divide between the humanities and the social sciences to become a truly polymorphous endeavour. Despite its broad purview, one aim arguably unites this body of work, and it is a fundamentally geographical one. Queer theory is about making room. It is about creating space for the queer, the deviant, and the different where they have been historically cast out. It is about challenging the order of things at scales from the domestic to the global and in realms from the juridical to the academic. So what is queer theory's future once room has been made? What role, if any, does it play when homosexuality becomes normalized? These questions are consequential ones because the nature and extent of space available for queers has changed. We are beginning to see signs that castigation of homosexuality is being displaced by tolerance in various ways and in various places. My concern is with these in-roads, but

peripherally. More centrally, I want to interrogate the ways in which this shifting terrain has simultaneously changed the landscape of queer studies. Where queer geographers have heretofore been primarily preoccupied with the mapping of queer space, this thesis looks at the space of queer studies. Specifically, a very polarized debate over the normalization of homosexuality in the United States has given rise to the widespread theoretical assumption of a rift between normalcy and queerness. But we cannot assume that this binary is easily mapped onto other places. In this thesis, I consider both the rhetorical terms of these normalization debates and offer readings of several facets of cultural politics in post-apartheid South Africa – a state that has officially embraced homosexuals in its re-articulation. Through these explorations, I assert that a metaphorical geography of queer scholarship is not only discernible, it is in need of reconfiguring if queer theory is to continue to be a productive intellectual force as homosexuality gains acceptance in diverse settings.

Occupying excluded space

Due to the problematic of heteronormativity – that is, the assumption that heterosexuality is the normal or only form of sexuality – queer theorists are accustomed to theorizing from and about spaces of exclusion. For it has typically been the case that “most of us [are] “out there,” constrained by marginalization” (Ingram et al 1997, 6). Since the category of homosexuality came into being (see Foucault 1990), gay and lesbian lives¹ have been marked as different and forced to occupy a position on the edge

¹ Of course the lives of other queers such as transsexuals and bisexuals could be listed here. But while the acronym LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer) is often used as inclusive shorthand in queer studies, I will not deploy it throughout this work. The debates to which I respond refer to the normalization of same-sex couples and actively ignore the experiences of bisexuals, transsexuals and other possible queer formulations. I will use the terms “gay and lesbian” and “homosexual” throughout merely because it is these lives that are being drawn into the mainstream. This move is not intended to endorse the opening of the field of sexual norms to only homosexuality.

of culture, economy and politics proper. A central task of queer theory, therefore, has been to meet the experience of abjection with an analytic. The one that has come to guide it is particularly indebted to the thought of Judith Butler and Michel Foucault. It is one that opens up possibilities and thereby offers hope to those who “live in the social world as what is “impossible,” illegible, unrealizable, unreal, and illegitimate” (Butler 1999, viii). It does so by challenging the temporal assumptions that support a priori arguments locking homosexuality and heterosexuality into prediscursive origins. And it does so by reconfiguring the spatial presumptions that guide understandings of the workings of power.

Butler and Foucault arguably inaugurated queer theory by writing against the language of liberation that characterized gay and lesbian studies and activism. This language presupposed the existence of fixed precultural homosexual and heterosexual identities and the repression of the former by the latter. Describing this framework, Foucault states, “it seems to us that truth, lodged in our most secret nature, “demands” only to surface; that if it fails to do so, this is because a constraint holds it in place, the violence of a power weighs it down, and it can finally be articulated only at the price of a kind of liberation” (1990, 60). This logic of truth-telling, however, draws lines that are simply too neat. It maintains impermeable boundaries that cannot always and everywhere be empirically demonstrated. In Butler’s words: “the theory which presumes bisexuality or homosexuality as the “before” to culture and then locates the “priority” as the source of a prediscursive subversion, effectively forbids from within the terms of culture the very subversion that it ambivalently defends and defends against” (1999, 99). The language of liberation, in other words, overlooks the fact that homosexuality is not

simply heterosexuality's outside. It is its constitutive outside. "The boundary of the body as well as the distinction between internal and external is established through the ejection and transvaluation of something originally part of identity into a defiling otherness" (Butler 1999, 170).

While the inner body strives to maintain a stable boundary between itself and the outer body, success is only always temporary. Power is omnipresent, "not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another" (Foucault 1990, 93). Resistance is therefore never outside power. Rather, it mobilizes it in order to resist specific, institutionalized modalities of power that enforce domination, discrimination and exclusion. As such, though there are occasionally great ruptures in the structure of power, more often one is dealing with mobile and transitory points of resistance. Given this relational and fluid character of power relationships, sexuality works performatively rather than simply repressively. Rather than operating as a function of Power-with-a-capital P – in other words, as a power that looms over and above – norms accumulate "the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior, authoritative set of practices" (Butler 1993a, 19). But in repetition is the promise of slippage, and in this promise is the possibility that the constitutive outside might get in.

So homosexuality is not only heterosexuality's other. It is its excess. As such, there is power at the margins and the promise of radical change. For example, Lawrence Knopp states, "sexualities that dissent – especially male and female homosexuality – may threaten the entire power structure of capitalist organizations and must, therefore, be

repressed" (1992, 660). Similar arguments have been widely made about the relationship between queerness, the state and powerful institutions such as the nuclear heterosexual family that support it (see chapter four). There are "all kinds of contemporary anxieties over the heterosexualized pure and solidly bordered body of the nation being penetrated, threatened, overcome, and/or dissolved by a plethora of frightening foreign microbes and dangers" (Nast 1998, 195). Thus the dissident sexual citizen can act as a figure of critique. "Heavily ironic, self-consciously postmodern and aggressively radical," queer offers "possibilities for transforming society by redrawing the spaces of sexual citizenship" (Bell 1995, 143).

Recently, however, in the United States, the radical promise of queerness seems to be coming undone. As the political and cultural climate in that country has changed from one of hostility towards homosexuals to their tolerance, many within the ranks of the gay and lesbian movement have found the lure of acceptance enticing. As Butler herself has stated, the goal of her own work and of queer theorizing more broadly has always been to "insist upon the extension of legitimacy to bodies that have been regarded as false, unreal, and unintelligible" (1999, xxiii). But the way in which the "new gay politics" that has surfaced in recent years has gone about gaining this legitimacy has turned out to not quite be what queer theorists had in mind. As a result, there is now a fairly substantial literature within Anglo-American queer studies that addresses the normalization of homosexuality in particular critical ways. It is to these debates that I turn now. But before doing so, a clarification is in order.

As I have already stated, this thesis is about the cultural politics of homosexuality in South Africa. That it begins with a discussion of queer studies debates in the United

States may therefore seem at least odd and at worst problematic. I take this starting point, however, for one simple reason. Debates around the normalization of homosexuality are very firmly rooted in US queer studies. Within Anglo-American queer theorizing this is true despite the fact that we might consider homosexuals in Canada and the United Kingdom to be more “normalized” as a result of successful campaigns to claim a wide variety of human rights (though for some thoughts on the normalization of homosexuality in these contexts, see Casey et al 2004; Goldie 2002; and Owen 2002). Beyond this body of work, and particularly beyond queer studies in the west, the normalization of homosexuality is not a central theme of debate. So I start with the US. But I will travel to South Africa. And through a view from there, I hope to arrive at a new place for queer thought.

The “good gay” citizen and the demise of a movement

From its beginnings in the homophile movement of the 1950s, through the emergence of homosexual liberation in the 1960s and 70s and the challenge of queer politics in the late 1980s and 1990s, the American gay and lesbian movement has hardly been uncontested terrain.² Internal conflict over assimilationist versus confrontational tactics and calls to equally and adequately represent the interests of all gays and lesbians no matter their race, class, or gender positionalities have leveled serious challenges. Nonetheless, the overall goals of the movement have remained remarkably consistent. They have been “the expansion of a right to sexual privacy against the intrusive, investigatory labeling powers of the state, and the simultaneous expansion of gay public life through institution building and publicity” (Duggan 2003, 51). Recently, a “new gay

² For an excellent overview and analysis of the continuities and ruptures wrought by these contestations, see Jagose 1996.

politics” that focuses squarely on the state-sanctioned privatization of gay and lesbian struggles has gained momentum. This occurrence poses the most serious and potentially devastating threat to the prospects of maintaining a progressive movement that gay and lesbian politics in the US has yet seen.

Before addressing the contours of this “new gay politics”, the political opportunity structure that it is responding to should be explicated. By the early 1990s, American neoliberal politicians not only extricated themselves from the policies of “tax-and-spend liberals.” They also began to abandon the moral conservatism of the religious right. This period of course coincided with the election of Democrat Bill Clinton to the office of the presidency. But it is a trend that has been sustained across partisan lines. Clinton’s serious efforts to reduce the range of exclusions that sexual minorities endure have by no means been matched by his successor George W. Bush. And it may seem strange to assert that there are new political opportunities for gay and lesbian acceptance in the wake of events in 2004 that included a failed attempt by the Bush administration to constitutionally prohibit same-sex marriage and the success of propositions banning same-sex marriage in eleven states. The current Republican government is unquestionably a supporter of the maintenance of the heterosexual family. Nonetheless, there is much evidence that an official rhetoric of tolerance has displaced one of hostility towards gays and lesbians.

For instance, when Moral Majority founder Reverend Jerry Falwell appeared on televangelist Reverend Pat Robertson’s show *The 700 Club* and declared that homosexuals (among others such as feminists and abortionists) were partly responsible for the World Trade Towers’ terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, his statements were

quickly repudiated by both Democrats and Republicans. In particular, Republican Governor of New York, George Pataki, and President Bush together reversed the exclusion of same-sex domestic partners from the list of beneficiaries eligible for government provided relief funds for families of the victims of the attacks of 9/11. In reference to this move, Pataki tellingly made the following statement: "In all honesty, for too long, the party that I am proud to be a member of...was a party that did express intolerance (quoted in Duggan 2003, 44).

Thus, despite the spate of gay-unfriendly legislation that still exists in the United States, an at least rhetorical commitment to diversity and a narrow, nonredistributive form of equality politics persists during Bush's tenure.³

In addition, as Neil Smith notes, "corporate capitalism has caught up with our categories and quite effortlessly leveraged their buyout" (2000, 1012). Or, as Hardt and Negri remark as they theorize the global order at the new millennium under the sobriquet "empire," it is now "clear that corporations do not operate simply by excluding the gendered and/or racialized Other. In fact, the old modernist forms of racist and sexist theory are the explicit enemies of this new corporate culture" (2000, 153). In other words, exclusion is quickly becoming bad business practice. Accordingly, a new economics that supports "diversity" and "tolerance" has emerged. The Volvo and Coors ads in Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate the ways in which gays and lesbians are being positioned as a powerful niche market.

³ Despite signs of an official level of tolerance, it does however appear that "culture war" attacks have begun to resurface. A recent case in point is a January 2005 controversy over *SpongeBob Squarepants* in which the religious right organization Focus on Family expressed outrage that the cartoon character was being used as a tool for "pro-gay propaganda" because of his appearance in a video remake of the Sister Sledge hit and gay anthem "We Are Family".

Finally, positive images of homosexuals now proliferate in American popular culture and media. Television shows such as “Queer as folk”, “The L word”, “Queer eye for the straight guy”, and “Will and Grace” garner large audiences on major networks and cable channels. This is unprecedented in US cultural history.

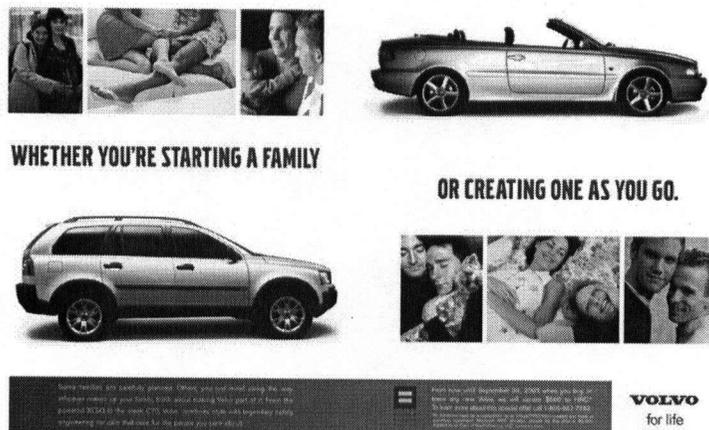


Figure 1. Volvo ad.



Figure 2. Coors ad

So, a distinct window of opportunity for the mainstreaming of homosexuality has opened.⁴ And the “good gay” citizen has emerged to push (certain) gays and lesbians through it. Where iconoclasm and confrontation once characterized American sexual politics, moralism and an air of respectability are now more dominant themes. This change is manifest in the drastically transformed nature of the gay and lesbian movement and in the rhetoric of a “new gay politics” spoken by those who claim to represent it.

Beginning in the early 1990s, national lesbian and gay civil rights, lobbying and litigation organizations moved noticeably away from the strategies of constituency mobilization and community-based consultation that had erstwhile been central to their efforts. Washington-style politics have taken their place. In other words, direct-action activism has declined, election campaigns and lobbying have taken on massive importance, lifestyle magazines have become the principal public venue of the movement, and an obsession with the achievement of a “place at the table” has displaced the urge to perpetuate a sense of belonging to a movement (see Warner 1999, 76-77). Or, in Lisa Duggan’s more to the point estimation, the dominant national lesbian and gay organizations have become the “lobbying, legal, and public relations firms for an increasingly narrow gay, moneyed elite” (2003, 45). The movement, in at least its official iteration, has largely abandoned its progressive-left affiliations. It now champions the cause of the “good gay.”

⁴ It should be noted that the effects of the lure of acceptance extend far beyond the gay and lesbian movement. Consensus is emerging on the point that as US party politics has turned away from the “culture wars,” social movement strategies in general have shifted. For astute analyses of the ways in which acceptance by corporate capitalism and the advancement of liberal politics have undercut the realization of racial, gendered, and economic equality, see: Castronovo and Nelson (eds) 2002; Chow 2002; Fraser 1997; and Gilroy 2000.

Resonant with, if not directly behind, this reversal in tactics is the logic of a group of influential, media-savvy pundits who have set out an agenda for the forging of a “gay mainstream.” Coming together as the Independent Gay Forum, these writers position themselves at the “cutting edge” of a new gay movement. Their website⁵ sets out the organizations principles as follows:

- We support the full inclusion of gays and lesbians in civil society with legal equality and equal social respect. We argue that gays and lesbians, in turn, contribute to the creativity, robustness, and decency of our national life.
- We share a belief in the fundamental virtues of the American system and its traditions of individual liberty, personal moral autonomy and responsibility, and equality before the law. We believe those traditions depend on the institutions of a market economy, free discussion, and limited government.
- We deny “conservative” claims that gays and lesbians pose any threat to social morality or the political order.
- We equally oppose “progressive” claims that gays should support radical social change or restructuring of society.
- We share an approach, but we disagree on many particulars. We include libertarians, moderates, and classical liberals. We hold differing views on the role of government, personal morality, religious faith, and personal relationships. We share these disagreements openly: we hope that readers will find them interesting and thought provoking.

In line with these principles, a gay and lesbian movement has limited necessity. The IGF writers assert that homosexuals are normal and that this fact need simply be legislatively recognized. Access to the institutions of marriage and the military, it is argued, will signal acceptance and create the conditions for gay and lesbian life beyond discrimination. Once these milestones are achieved, the movement will have reached its own end and can close its doors with satisfaction.

⁵ See <www.indegayforum.org/about/>.

Criticism of this “new gay politics” has been abundant and has stemmed particularly from those sympathetic to the “progressive” thought that the IGF explicitly repudiates. Michael Warner characterizes the new “respectable” lesbian and gay politics as the movement’s “takeover” rather than “coming of age” (1999, 75). He argues that the gay and lesbian movement in the United States has historically been at its best when it has been rooted in a “queer ethic of dignity in shame” rather than narrow moralism and is therefore troubled that shifts in the nature of national organizing and the rise of the IGF have transformed the “politics of sex” into a “politics of sexual identity”. This new “PG” movement, he writes, is one that “you could take home to Mom” (42). But it is not one that the majority of gays and lesbians will benefit from or maintain a sense of belonging to. As the “new gay politics” attacks public sexual cultures as antipathetic to the acceptance of homosexuals by the mainstream, the “bad queer” is called forcefully into being alongside the “good gay.” For Warner, the “queer movement” has been displaced by a “gay trend.” Queer worldmaking has been displaced by a “politics of privatization [that] destroys real privacy even as it erodes public activity” (174).

Richard Goldstein also sees the devastation of queer publics in the politics of the IGF. As these “attack queers” – named thus because they assail their own kind – petition for a place at the table, they “must prove above all that their arrival doesn’t signal an invitation to every common queer” (2002, 52). And so they retreat into the private realm, abandoning the possibility of real transformation. It “takes a community to liberate a person” (23) but in the “new gay politics,” as Dale Carpenter, one of its proponents, writes: “You have no secret rings or rites, no distinct set of values. You’re only an individual who must make your own way in the world, unable to depend on the safety of

belonging to an elect tribe” (quoted in Goldstein 2002, 21). Andrew Sullivan, author of *Virtually Normal* (1995) and possibly the most high profile of the IGF writers, supports the position that gays can go it on their own with his conviction that they are not victims in the economic sense. Therefore “special” legislation – like anti-bias laws – is unnecessary. In light of this stance, for Goldstein, the changing of the movement’s guard has made poverty the newest “dirty secret” of gay and lesbian communities.

Steven Seidman chimes in that “the politics of the normal gay involves minority rights, not the end of heterosexual privilege” (2004, 14). Lisa Duggan agrees as she argues that the “new neoliberal sexual politics of the IGF” is a “politics that does not contest heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (2003, 50). A moneyed elite now runs the movement. The potential consequences of this fact shine through in the IGF’s writings. Bruce Bawer, for instance, has stated that “much of gay America’s hope resides not in working-class revolt but in its exact opposite – a trickling down of gay-positive sentiments from elite corporate boardrooms into shops, farms and factories” (quoted in Duggan 2003, 54). Duggan not only makes clear the links between the maintenance of heterosexual privilege and class privilege, but between heterosexual privilege and racial and gendered ones as well. She highlights an attack by IGF writer Rob Blanchard and five other white gay journalists on the reputation and funding of a lesbian-of-colour led arts and community organization in San Antonio, Texas. They charge:

it is a political organization – obsessed with victimhood and using “sexism, racism, classism, and homophobia” as rhetorical and political

ploys to extract guilt money from individuals and organizations, including the City. [This organization] has made its battle for tax dollars a referendum on homosexuality and we resent this. But [its] greatest damage to the gay and lesbian community is the divisiveness it creates within by repeatedly injecting issues of class, race and gender for self-serving purposes (quoted in Duggan 2003, 55).

The threat that this new gay anti-movement poses is not contained within sexual politics. For, “this gay right wing, self-constituted as a new center, is definitely *not* a single-issue political lobby. The IGF’s gay equality rhetoric is a proffered new window-dressing for a broad, multi-issue neoliberal politics” (Duggan 2003, 65).⁶

“Bad queers” stake their claim

So the IGF writers have pitted their brand of gay normalcy against queer radical diversity in no uncertain terms and queer theorists have responded in kind. But a polarized debate has not been the only product of this exchange. A queer left resolve has deepened such that the insistence that there is now more than ever a need for alternative visions is a palpable sentiment within recent work. And the space from whence queer theorizing stems has shifted somewhat along the way.

As already noted, a faith in “queering” institutions from their constitutive outside has long driven queer theorizing. But as homosexuality starts to move away from the margins, concern has set in. Larry Knopp presaged such anxieties in his 1992 statement that:

The capacity of these more radical groups [queers] to succeed in all their efforts is questionable, however, given capital’s immense power (and current need) to appropriate almost all alternative codings and symbols and to construct them as new othernesses that become

⁶ For an insightful commentary that draws out further ramifications of the politics of homosexuality’s normalization in the US but does not respond directly to the IGF, see Puar and Rai (2002). They consider the politics of identity in the climate of the “war on terror” and argue that the practices of normalized queer communities contribute to a “docile patriotism” that produces the “monster-terrorist-fag,” a figure that can be quarantined and cast out as a marker of the noncivilized.

constituent elements in the creation of new economically productive places (666).

With the IGF's emergence and the consolidation of a new elite style of national gay and lesbian activism in the mid to late 1990s, the possibility of appropriation is more and more frequently foregrounded. For instance, in their introduction to a volume on *Homo economics*, the editors state:

Inside a cozy brownstone, curled up next to a health-insured domestic partner in front of a Melissa Etheridge video on MTV, flipping through *OUT* magazine and sipping an Absolut and tonic, capitalism can feel pretty good (Gluckman & Reed 1997, xv).

Alexandra Chasin (2000) goes a step beyond problematizing complacency to assert that as a newfound consumer citizenship has enfranchised only a select few gays and lesbians the movement has simply "sold out."

Not surprisingly, calls to get back to the business of radical queerness abound. Rather than reveling in a new homonormativity in which gay white male oriented commodity forms rescue a previously biologized patriarchy (Nast 2002), expressions of dissidence are called for. Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes argues that "alternative positions" must be stressed in the face of the "unrestrained expansion of US global capitalism" and its cultural industry "which threatens to wipe out and/ or assimilate difference as nothing more than a market tool" (2002, 164). Chela Sandoval wants to displace "good gay" citizens with "internationalist citizen-warriors" who might bring into being a globalization that is eroticized differently through activism (2002). And many want to see the return of a movement that pursues an agenda of across the board institutional equality and cultural justice for homosexuals that is not isolated from other social and sexual conflicts (see Duggan 2003; Nast 2002; Puar 2002a; Seidman 2004;

Warner 1999). As Michael Warner argues, a “lesbian and gay public has been reshaped to ignore or refuse the counterpublic character that has marked its history” (2002, 88). The queer left wants to reverse this trend. It wants to get back to being heteronormativity’s excess and exploitation’s enemy. In short, it wants to return to the outside.

Where the new gay normalcy championed by the IGF has brought the gay and lesbian movement into the mainstream, the queer left emphasizes expressions of queerness outside the movement. In Michael Warner’s words:

The queer ethos is currently thriving in urban scenes, in pockets of alternative culture in the suburbs, among younger queers, in drag culture, among black and Latino cultures, in club scenes and the arts, on web sites and in queer zines, among all kinds of people in the least likely places (1999, 67).

In these spaces beyond the mainstream, it is argued that people are still working to bring a queer world into being. While normal gays have gotten in, it seems that true queerness still lies outside. There is therefore hope that such a spirit can reinvigorate alternative forms of gay and lesbian activism apart from the national movement.

Since the “new gay politics” of the IGF has undermined a progressive gay and lesbian movement and directly challenged the validity of queer theory, strong responses from the queer left are unquestionably in order. And while I am wholeheartedly sympathetic with the desire to proffer alternative ways forward, I am nonetheless concerned by the ways in which they have been framed.

A line between the “normal gay” and the “bad queer” was originally put in place by the IGF. The former wants only to fit into and contribute to society while the latter wants to change it and is rightfully excluded. Queer theorists have strongly defended their aims and engaged in a much-needed critique of those of the IGF. But in doing so they

have maintained the normal-queer binary created to attack them and thus put strictures on where queerness can be found. Both the IGF and the new queer left conceptualize homosexual identities – whether the “good gay” or the “bad queer” – as containers that move through space and impact upon it in certain predictable ways. They abandon the notion that gay, lesbian and queer identities only exist in acts of performance that are simultaneously produced by and productive of processes of spatialization.

As I set out above, Butler and Foucault theorized a fluid, relational queer spatiality. It is one in which binaries that have historically served to exclude queers – such as those between heterosexuality and homosexuality, the deviant and the acceptable, the licit and the illicit – were revealed to be fictive. But in responses to the IGF’s attacks, this logic has been largely discarded. In its stead, a binary between the normal and the queer is now widely considered to be real and worth maintaining. And with it, parallel gulfs are purported to also exist between resistance and capitulation, appropriation and threat, and the inside and the outside.⁷ These binaries position “queer” space as structurally dependent on “normal” space and define its existence by exclusion from, and opposition to, the dominant and heteronormative. Such a construction “elides the dominant’s dependence on the other and, by naturalizing a place of queerness, defines where queerness may not exist” (Rushbrook 2002, 203). In short, it reverts to a conceptualization of space as absolute, as a container in which objects and events occur rather than as a determinant of social reality. It understands space as an external coordinate that can be mapped and claimed. For queer geographers, this move should be a troubling one. For it resonates with the spatial fetishism of areal differentiation and

⁷ This point is treated briefly here but is the subject of chapter two.

spatial science that has been forcefully discredited within the discipline (see Gregory and Urry 1985; Harvey 1996; Olsson 1974)

Gay performance artist Jack Smith once said that, “normalcy is the evil side of homosexuality” (quoted in Munoz 1999, ix). The way in which the IGF debates oppose normalcy to queerness in many ways supports this statement and thus demands strong response. But Smith’s wording recognizes that the normal is not outside the queer. To get back to a relational concept of space in which space is not outside but constitutive of social relations, I argue that we take this possibility seriously.

More than that, however, it will ensure that queer theorizing stays relevant in contexts beyond the United States. There are other modes of normalizing homosexuality than that advocated by the IGF. And as we see such alternatives becoming manifest in countries around the globe, we would be wise to not simply dismiss them. The predetermination that queer theorizing takes place only from the outside and should consider only cultural, political and economic spaces to be queer if they embrace exclusion and are overtly progressive will not allow us to do so.

The new queer geopolitics

Queer has gone global. By this I do not simply mean that queer is now global in the sense that gay and lesbian culture has proliferated to every corner of the planet. I refer not – or at least not directly – to the putatively lucrative lesbian and gay travel industry, not to the existence of urban ghettos for those engaging in alternative lifestyles in cosmopolitan and not-so cosmopolitan cities everywhere, not to queer cyberscapes and flows, and not even to the burgeoning transnational gay and lesbian rights movement. These trends are amply remarked upon and are by now perhaps better characterized as

banal than as strange and new (see Adam, Duyyendak & Krouwel (eds) 1999; Altman 1997; Berry, Martin & Yue (eds) 2003; Manalansan 1997; Puar (ed) 2002b). Rather, what I am concerned with is the ways in which these queer cultures are entangled with globalized polities and economies. I am interested not in how global queer subjectivities are produced through contact amongst queers themselves across imagined global/ local, western/ non-western dividing lines, but how queerness is produced by and productive of nationalist and globalized imaginaries. I suggest that other relationships between queerness and normalcy than that that the IGF supports are occurring outside the US as a new and at least partially gay-friendly geopolitics is emerging.

A selective survey of quite recent events will attest to why I focus my attention thus by demonstrating the ways in which gays and lesbians have been officially incorporated into various states in various ways. First, there is an unmistakable trend towards greater recognition of human rights for sexual minorities worldwide. In 1996, South Africa became the first country in the world to constitutionally prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, with Ecuador, Fiji and Portugal subsequently following suit. While these four countries remain exceptional in constitutional terms, numerous others provide significant, though piecemeal, protections for homosexuals within their human rights frameworks. A partial list of such countries would include Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Israel, Norway, the Netherlands, and Sweden. Notably, Belgium and the Netherlands extend full access to the institution of marriage for gays and lesbians – a list to which Canada will likely soon be

added⁸ – while various other states acknowledge same-sex relationships as civil unions. Even the United States, despite its maintenance of hostile legislation like the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy applicable to homosexuals in the military, is in the process of repealing sodomy laws nation-wide after they were declared unconstitutional in a Texas court challenge.⁹ Also of particular note, the formation of the European Union has resulted in an ostensibly gay-friendly region as the elimination of homophobic legislation is a stipulation of accession to the EU¹⁰ and its Parliament has recommended that same-sex couples be allowed to legally marry and adopt children.

Further, even in states that have not yet enfranchised gays and lesbians, tolerance is growing as political costs and moral panics seem to be outweighed by the purported economic benefits of being gay-friendly. While certain facets of the corporate world long-ago discovered the benefits of marketing to a gay and (less so) lesbian niche popularly perceived to be disproportionately affluent, many states developing their national brands to attract tourist and investment dollars in a competitive global economy are consciously developing a cosmopolitan image, an integral part of which seems to be the allowance of thriving gay and lesbian communities. The Asian context alone offers ample examples of this trend. The Hong Kong government is considering the explicit targeting of the pink dollar as part of their official tourism marketing efforts. And the gay and lesbian community there is optimistic about this move. Activist Chung To states: “It

⁸ Seven Canadian provinces (Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec, Manitoba, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan) and one of its territories (the Yukon) have legalized same-sex marriage. Debate continues on whether or not to extend this decision to the federal level.

⁹ Though it should be noted that immediately following this July 2003 decision, President George W. Bush made it clear that the US government would be digging in its heels and definitely not following the lead of its northern neighbour on the marriage issue.

¹⁰ Thus creating a political opening in unlikely places like Romania, a state that was previously notably hostile to the plight of gays and lesbians. For an analysis of the queering of the European Union, see Stychin 2002.

is true that if we had a gay pride parade, only a few people would show up and it would be an embarrassment...But if we throw parties, they will come. It is the best way we have to bring people together” (quoted in Friess 2004). Thus, though no explicit civil rights movement yet exists, political space for gays and lesbians may be opening up through the economy.

In July 2003 Singapore’s (now former) Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong punctuated the city-state’s noticeable shift over the last several years from a policy of repression of gay and lesbian businesses and organizations to one of willful blindness by publicly stating that gays and lesbians should be tolerated as the nation tries to pull its economy out of a prolonged recession by transforming itself into a creative, cosmopolitan, global city.¹¹ Though subsequent homophobic governmental acts – like the summary dismissal of an application to register People Like Us (a gay and lesbian advocacy organization) as a society – have dampened euphoria over this move, it has unquestionably changed the social space available to Singapore’s homosexuals. Hope is therefore not lost that political change will eventually follow.

Though Thailand has long been recognized as the “pink capital” of Asia, it has not been officially sanctioned as such. Recently, however, there are strong signs that this will change. In a bizarre turn of events, a gay and lesbian political lobby group has been launched to try to prevent Singapore from snatching its status as the most popular gay tourism destination in the region. The Homosexual Political Group of Thailand (HPGT) is arguing that government support is crucial if it is to continue to benefit from the

¹¹ Economic geographer Richard Florida (2002) has popularized the notion that there is a relationship between successful “creative” urban economies and gay and lesbian cultures. Within Singapore, his work is widely cited as a justification for these recent developments.

lucrative pink tourism market. And the tourism board appears to be listening to these critiques.

And in East Asia, China, after suppressing homosexuals for decades, has in recent years begun to show tolerance for the proliferation of gay and lesbian establishments like bars and saunas. While this move is partially linked to the opening up of a dialogue between the gay community and certain government ministries as a requirement for dealing with HIV/AIDS, it is also part of a concerted government effort to change its authoritarian image (however incrementally) as it goes through reform processes that make it more vulnerable to the whims of global capital.

Taiwan is another startling case. With the lifting of Martial Law in 1987, a liberalization of sexual norms has been evident. In the first issue of *G & L*, a lifestyle magazine for gays and lesbians, the ruling party published a message of support for *tongzhi* (literally meaning “comrade,” colloquially referring to homosexuals) equality, liberation and rights. It went so far as to proclaim itself “the *tongzhi*’s *tongzhi*” or “the gay person’s comrade” (Martin 2000).¹²

Outside of Asia, nations that have provided significant sponsorship to the development of gay and lesbian festivals and culture in the name of attracting lucrative pink currencies include Australia, the Netherlands, and South Africa.

As I have said, these are but a few select examples of signs of the at least partial undoing of certain heteronormative capital and state logics.¹³ And while many more could be cited, I wish to neither glorify nor ascribe any degree of ineluctability to this

¹² For analyses of the ways in which the construction of alternative sexual identities in Taiwan has been intimately tied to nation-building processes, see: Chao 2000; and Patton 2002.

¹³ To be clear, I am by no means suggesting that official tolerance or even acceptance of sexual minorities puts an end to societal homophobia.

trend. It must be pointed out that for all those nations that are making the transition from persecuting homosexuals as enemies of the state to valuing them as citizens and in some cases even casting them as saviours of troubled economies, there are probably as many or more that vilify them. For example, at the same time as South Africa was drafting its landmark constitution, Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe made the first of many public statements condemning homosexuals as morally depraved and un-African. This theme has since been picked up on by various heads of state on the continent including those of Ghana, Malawi, Namibia, and Zambia. Gays and lesbians are indeed positioned as proxies for neo-colonialism and the evils of a globalization driven by and favouring the west and as scapegoats upon which criticism of the state can be deflected and hegemonies maintained. Combining the threat of neo-colonialism with threats to religious freedom, another sort of homophobic state emerges. Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Algeria, Egypt, and Malaysia come to mind here.

So I by no means contend that the globe or the whole of the “international community” is being queered. But that there is now a divide between gay-friendly and unfriendly nations is a queer development. That a resolution expressing concern over the occurrence of violations of human rights against persons on the grounds of their sexual orientation was sponsored by Brazil and supported by nineteen other countries when it was brought before the United Nations Human Rights Commission in April 2003¹⁴ is a significant departure from days not so long ago when gay and lesbian organizations were summarily disallowed participation in United Nations meetings (such as the 1995 Beijing

¹⁴ When Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt, Libya and Malaysia opposed the resolution and several others including the United States refused to declare support or non-support, vote on its passage was suspended to the next session of the UNHRC in 2004. That it was suspended and not taken off the table has been widely lauded by sexual minority activists as a partial victory.

World Conference on Women¹⁵). Based on these developments, I argue that it may now be more politically urgent for queer theorists to explore the consequences of this fractured queering of the United Nations and to accept that we may have to contend with a Queer Nation¹⁶ of a different sort than to continue to focus on the potential outcomes of intentionally oppositional political strategies.

Given stark polarities within US gay and lesbian and queer activism and theorizing, it is not surprising that a normal-queer binary has been attributed much credence. But I suggest that it does not travel well. Warner, Duggan and others have usefully pointed out that the current direction in which the US lesbian and gay movement is headed threatens to instrumentalize the normalization of queer life. We are seeing a different set of events in other contexts however. Elsewhere, queer life is indeed becoming normal (or at least normalized). But where American queer theorists are concerned with a transformation of queer life from within so that gays and lesbians might fit into a straight world, in other contexts the straight world – ie. national economies and politics – is embracing queer life. While Duggan, Warner et al write about the normalization of queer life in relation to the new gay politics' efforts to court the mainstream, I am interested in what happens when the mainstream courts queerness. Might the relationship between queerness and normalcy be theorized differently then? And if so, how might such retheorizations offer ways of getting unstuck from the newfound attachment to the queer-normal binary in the US debates?

¹⁵ Though lesbian issues were raised in the NGO forum accompanying the meeting, all references to female same-sex sexuality were removed from the final document of that meeting.

¹⁶ I capitalize this phrase to make implicit reference to the American activist organization Queer Nation, active throughout the 1990s, which took a deliberately confrontational approach to the attainment of citizenship for sexual minorities.

Despite the new visibility and façade of tolerance that gay and lesbian lives in the US are undoubtedly affected by in many positive ways, the attainment of substantive equality is undoubtedly far off. Republican Senator Rick Santorum, after a vote in the Senate on his party's motion to ban gay marriage in July 2004, had the following to say: "I would argue that the future of our country hangs in the balance because the future of marriage hangs in the balance. Isn't that the ultimate homeland security, standing up and defending marriage?" (Globe and Mail 2004) Though the motion was rejected, his words are far from hollow. As Richard Goldstein reminds the "good gays": "under the finesse, we're still faggots" (2002, 4). Antigay bills are pending in numerous state legislatures and the marriage campaign is a tenuous one. In short, the US polity is not eager to embrace homosexuality. The case is therefore strong that queer normalcy justifies a certain neoliberal brand of conservatism in the US. But can the same be assumed in national contexts that willingly embrace homosexuality? Can the same rift between the normal and the queer be said to exist within nascent gay and lesbian movements that have come into being through state sponsorship rather than having long fought for it from the margins? Might normalcy coexist with queerness and thus possibly make queer worlds rather than straightforwardly destroying the conditions for their emergence? And, if so, how might these queer worlds be different than what we thought they would be?

These are questions, I argue, that the terms of debate around the normalization of homosexuality within queer studies do not allow us to utter. In what follows, I set out how I have come to ask them. Through close readings of the normalization debates and of various facets of gay and lesbian cultural politics in post-apartheid South Africa (one of the newly queered states mentioned above), I contend that events that easily lend

themselves to interpretation as the straightforward appropriation of queer alterity by hegemonic institutions can also be read differently. Given this focus on providing an alternate reading that opens up new questions, I wish to make it clear from the outset that my intention is not to provide answers in the South African context. An exploration of exactly how the queer-normal relationship works in a non-binary fashion that is not necessarily un-queer is beyond my reach here. Rather, my goal is simply to suggest the possibility that it does and to therefore open up areas of study in South Africa and many other contexts around the politics of queer normalcy that are firmly closed off at present.

Before setting out the road ahead and concluding this opening chapter, I first want to clarify the rationale behind my choice of South Africa as “case study.” It is of course a desirable site of study because it is outside the context of the heated American debates and may, as I have suggested above, represent a new sort of queer geopolitics in which the normal-queer relationship may be quite different than that in the US. But it is also an interesting site of study for another broader and even more consequential reason. Simply stated, by looking at the normalization debate from a vantage point outside its decidedly Anglo-American purview, a reversal of the intellectual traffic flow that generally characterizes queer theory will be performed. When queer theorists first began to think through the connections between queerness and globalization, the flow of knowledge was unquestionably from “west” to “rest.” Through the recombination of postcolonial critique with queer theory, this trend was quickly halted and the recognition made that the “non-west” does not easily fit into our categories and needs to be analyzed on its own terms. I want to go a step further.

Many queer theorists have recently commented upon the challenge that the conjugation of the study of sexuality with work on racialization, transnationalism, and globalization poses to queer knowledge claims (see Garber et al 2003; Halberstam 2003; Povinelli & Chauncey 1999). Thus my assertion that we need to look at the relationship between queerness and normalcy outside the west without allowing the US debates to overdetermine our analyses. But beyond this, I hope not to create some more appropriate non-western frame for understanding queer political economies elsewhere. Rather, I suggest there is a need to revamp the one we are using.

Taking the normal-queer elsewhere

Tensions between the material and the psychoanalytic have divided studies of homosexuality since a queer studies that is explicitly poststructural emerged alongside gay and lesbian studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Recent years, however, have seen a desire to bridge that gap become clear no matter what side of the theoretical spectrum being spoken from. This is certainly a constructive development and concerns over the normalization of queerness have undoubtedly played a role in its occurrence. Chapter two, "Normalization and the anxiety of queer knowledge production," therefore polemically traces the ways in which the stakes and consequences of normalization have been elaborated in this new, more explicitly material queer studies. It argues that three tropes have come to dominate analysis and prescription in the face of normalization. They are: the trope of homomale privilege; the spectre of the third world worker/ third world queer; and faith in the power of coalition building.

I agree that we need to re-examine our local and narrowly-construed strategies and to take seriously the conspicuously-consuming gay subject and that coalition building

has been and will certainly continue to be a useful and necessary tool for gay and lesbian political organizing. But I argue that behind these debates lies a crisis for Anglo-American queer studies and that the anxiety over the need to manage this crisis has heretofore put us in a difficult place from which to theorize. Scrutinizing the arguments made within these three tropes, I argue that a guiding desire to avoid normalcy, and correspondingly complicity, serves to occlude other questions from being asked and therefore other political avenues from being explored.

Chapter three, entitled "Exclusion in "gay Cape Town", is the first of three chapters that reads the relationship between queerness and normalcy in South Africa. All three do so by speaking directly to the theoretical claims made in chapter two. In this case, I respond to the trope of "homomasculine privilege". In debates over the normalization of homosexuality, much blame for the demise of queer radicality has been placed on the privileged gay white male. It is surmised that the manner in which he has gained a certain degree of acceptance has made the struggles of other queers who are differently positioned in terms of race, class and gender more difficult. In the context of the new gay politics' unabashed embrace of elitism, this is certainly an important and necessary critique. But that it has often been extended to a blanket criticism of consuming gay white males everywhere is problematic. In response, I explore the marketing of Cape Town as a gay travel destination and ask whether queer radicality might still be possible in a state of complicity with capital from which we cannot ever fully be divorced.

In queer tourism studies, many caution that we need to approach this new area of enquiry critically. For claims to queer space are often simultaneous claims of racial, class and gender privilege. And the production of "gay Cape Town" is no exception. Some

scholarly work on this object of study has recently emerged and it is concerned largely with uncovering the hidden exclusions that this marketing initiative masks. In this chapter, I take issue with this work, however. Tensions within gay and lesbian cultural politics in Cape Town are surely rife and campaigns to market "gay Cape Town" present the city as a white, homomascuine space. But, through an exploration of narratives of "gay Cape Town" taken from interviews conducted with its promoters, I suggest that "other" Cape Town queers are not straightforwardly positioned as outside this queer space. As such, I am wary of claims that "marketeters' fantasies" (Elder 2004, 583) are easily mapped onto this city and argue that we need to pay close attention to the complex set of processes through which it is produced.

Chapter four interrogates the argument made in the name of the trope of the third world worker/ third world queer. This trope's reliance upon an opposition between an overarching global sphere that impinges upon a distinct local sphere is interrogated via an exploration of the debates surrounding the inclusion of "sexual orientation" in the Equality Clause of South Africa's post-apartheid constitution.

Nelson Mandela described the signing of South Africa's new constitution as part of the transition from a "horrible past" to a "normal country." The pariah state's normalization also entailed the normalization of its formerly deviant gay and lesbian citizens. Considering the long tradition of homophobia within apartheid South Africa and the notable homophobia of nationalist struggles in general, the extraordinarily little opposition that met the lobbying effort for the inclusion of "sexual orientation" within the Equality Clause is surprising on first glance. Through a close reading of the debates that raged following the vociferous opposition of this turn of events by one marginal political

party, the otherwise overwhelming support for this embrace of homosexuality within the new nation makes eminently more sense. I argue that the major parties involved in the forging of the new nation strongly supported the enfranchisement of gays and lesbians not because they wanted to undermine the threat that homosexuality posed by appropriating it, but because their inclusion represented a queering of the political landscape. The rhetoric of acceptance of all citizens served to mitigate threats posed to the new nation by the remaining vestiges of apartheid discourse and quickly surfacing visions of despotism in the worst postcolonial African tradition.

Reading this nation-building process as the forging of a new domestic polity that was simultaneously and consciously refashioning its position within the global economy, the national (or local) and the global are inseparable here. Thus, rather than considering the inclusion of homosexuals in the new South African nation as an imposition of western values from a global "above," it can be argued that the constitutional process signals the emergence of a globalized nation that queered itself on its own terms.

The last of these empirical chapters, entitled "Imagining a gay and lesbian movement: Class, community and the spaces of politics", deals with the remaining trope, that which places "faith in coalition building." It does so by exploring the history of two prominent Johannesburg gay and lesbian organizations, the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (now the Equality Project) and Johannesburg Pride. The NCGLE was formed in 1994 specifically to lobby for the inclusion of "sexual orientation" in the constitution's Equality Clause. Its creation was literally the birth of the gay and lesbian movement in South Africa. Or at least it was intended to be. A conscious decision to pursue the constitutional lobbying effort in an explicitly non-grassroots fashion was taken

early on in the organization's formation. And its strategy of professionalism and a narrow single-issue focus did indeed prove successful. But it led to charges of elitism and unrepresentativeness from the broader gay and lesbian community and the creation of a legacy that would eventually be its downfall.

Despite the failure of the organization, it must be noted that the new South Africa is a place in which discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sex, culture, religion *and* sexual orientation (among many other grounds listed in the Equality Clause) is prohibited because the NCGLE articulated the gay and lesbian movement's (even if this movement were only an idea) fight for equality as one that was inseparable from the fight for liberation from other oppressions – most notably, but certainly not limited to, racial oppression. The NCGLE, for all intents and purposes, was therefore rooted in the strategy of coalition building that many queer theorists now advocate. Both it and the other organization I consider, Johannesburg Pride, have been firmly committed to the goal of combating injustices on the grounds of sexuality as well as gender, race and class so that the rights gains that the constitution's signing wrought could be enjoyed across the South African gay and lesbian community.

This penultimate chapter therefore considers the ways in which the coalitional politics of Johannesburg Pride and the NCGLE have played out in the post-apartheid era. It looks at the production of the figure of the "poor, black gay and lesbian" in the service of attempts to balance a politics of recognition with a politics of distribution and argues that the ways that the constitutional gains have been performed by each organization has served to discipline and undermine a movement. Above all, this chapter considers these cases for the contribution they make to long-standing feminist and queer debates over the

place of identity politics within leftist visions and concludes that invocations to instrumentalize connections across class, race and gender within our “communities” should be considered genealogically.

The sixth and final chapter takes its cue from Susan Buck-Morss who has stated that: “So long as the enemy really acts like the enemy, it poses no threat. Paradoxically, the threat on the meta-level is that the enemy might disappear” (2000, 13). This is so because, in Yao Souchou’s words: “Enemies are essential, in fact useful, because they help to say something about what we – ourselves and friends – are not, and do not wish to be” (2000, 62). It is therefore not surprising that the inclusion of homosexuality in certain times and places should spur on a major process of soul-searching within queer theorizing and political organizing. Previous chapters examine how responses to this turn of events have driven a wedge between the normal and the queer that does not exist everywhere. This concluding chapter argues that we therefore need to rethink the meaning of queer radicality without presuming an ability to predict what queer space is and where it will be found. It argues that we need to get past the normalization debates to begin to conceptualize such spaces as globalization and the state as already queer. Rather than fixating on the threat to queer politics that hegemonic reconfigurations pose, we might begin to examine the emergence of a queer geopolitics for what it does to processes like globalization and nation-building.

Such an undertaking would be a significant departure for queer geographies. And this is not incidental. I argue that while queer geographies have made an important contribution through the mapping of queer spaces, a move away from simply studying queers and towards queer theorizing geographically is long overdue. Such a move will

put the geographical study of sexualities in more productive conversation with the predominant concerns of economic, political, and cultural geography. In particular, the ways in which a theorization of queer geopolitics might push nascent attempts to theorize a feminist geopolitics in new and different directions will be explored.

Conclusion

Butler has stated that if 'queer' is to be a site of collective contestation:

it will have to remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes, and perhaps also yielded in favor of terms that do that political work more effectively (1993a, 19).

To never be owned, queer must also never be pinned down. Geographers well know that how we represent space matters. That queer theorists have been drawn into the normalization debates in a manner that insists upon a binary between the normal and the queer is problematic. Such a proposition strays from the relational spatialities of the very theory that the perpetuation of which is at issue. Unless we want to place artificial boundaries around our theorizing, we must accept that we cannot presume to know where queerness is.

Michael Warner, a vehement opponent of the "new gay politics," has stated that: "People speak as though "difference" were in itself a term of value. (It isn't). They also speak of inclusion as though it were synonymous with equality and freedom" (1993, xix). The quote ends there and is particularly potent precisely for this reason. He refuses to voice the implication. He refuses to pass judgment on whether inclusion is or isn't synonymous with equality and freedom. We should take this disruption in the cadence of his prose seriously. It is necessary that we do so because the boundaries between the licit

and illicit are being blurred in different ways in different contexts. And it is possible for us to do so while we simultaneously launch a challenge against the kind of normalization that the IGF favours. We can still celebrate queer acts that are overtly subversive while considering the possibilities of a politics of normalcy.

Chapter two

Normalization and anxious queer knowledge production

“Gay men and lesbians have not always existed. Instead, they are a product of history, and have come into existence in a specific historical era. Their emergence is associated with the relations of capitalism.”

-John D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity”

Power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production.

*-Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish**

“In the most profound sense, capitalism is the problem.” With these words, John D’Emilio (1983, 110) identified what has remained a central, nagging paradox for queer theorists; at least in North America. That is, that the expression of homosexual identities is at once enabled and curtailed by the relations of capitalism. In short, he argued that industrialization spurred on widespread urbanization that separated individuals en masse from their extended families. And as distinct and highly-gendered public and private spheres were thus created, spaces for same-sex interaction opened up – though differentially for women than for men and along race and class lines – that would facilitate the creation of queer, or at least gay and lesbian, communities and political movements. But, in D’Emilio’s view, that the system that allowed the birth of these newfound political identities simultaneously required the preeminence of the heterosexual family presented the cruel irony that the advancement of the homosexual cause would be forever limited.

In the twenty years since D’Emilio made this argument, in the United States, about which he wrote, there continues to be a disjuncture between claims to queer economic and political citizenship. However, the nature and meaning of this

contradiction have shifted over time. First, the pink dollar is no longer the exclusive preserve of the "family business." In part, gay and lesbian communities were built on a foundation of patronage of establishments in "gay ghettos" by gays and lesbians themselves. This trend continues today but the queer economic citizen has now also gone "mainstream." Seen as a lucrative niche market, gay and lesbian spending power is widely courted by corporations peddling everything from blue jeans to long distance phone services. And it seems that they are not only after us for our pocketbooks. They are also after our sensibilities as the trend-setting, progressive gay (and less so lesbian) aesthetic finds a place for itself in today's "creative," "risk-taking" economies. That queerness has thus been attributed new value leads to the second shift that with this newfound economic clout has come a desire to exploit it for political gain; at least within certain circles. For if homosexuals can make good consumer citizens, so the logic goes, perhaps they are not so different from their heterosexual counterparts after all. So why not let them benefit from the system as the system benefits from them. Why not acknowledge homosexual families as for all intents and purposes the same as the heterosexual family and bestow upon them the rights and privileges that go along with the title "married." Why not, in short, allow gays and lesbians to maximize their contribution to the national economy by recognizing them as valued members of the national polity.

So while D'Emilio was troubled by the conundrum that gay and lesbian subjectivities were founded on the basis of an economic citizenship that could seemingly never lead to full political citizenship, contemporary queer theorists face the possibility that it could. Yet they are no less troubled. For the tethering of queer political gains to

their economic value maintains the enabling/ limiting dialectic that D'Emilio identified. It enables the advancement of, in Michael Warner's (1999) terms, a sanitized, "PG" gay and lesbian movement in which citizenship is available to those who can afford it while limiting the scope for the articulation of alternative and perhaps more disruptive forms of queer citizenship under capitalism. And so notes of caution ring out. For instance, Miranda Joseph implores us not to allow ourselves to be "seduced" by "the notion that capitalism now addresses us in our diversity and particularity" (2002a, 147). And Janet Jakobsen clarifies that "[t]he appeal to market-niche status as a site of gay liberation seriously underestimates the intertwining of the value-free with values and of the market and the state" (2002, 60).

Based on such warnings that the incorporation of gays and lesbians into capitalism or the state may not threaten these institutions, many queer theorists have speculated on the causes of this problematic resolution of the economic/ political citizenship relationship and attempt to rethink what were heretofore considered to be tried and true political strategies. Generally, the narrow scope of gay and lesbian political visions seems to be the culprit; at least according to the small literature that has grown up around this topic. The single issue focus of gay and lesbian politics, the local purview of queer organizing to the exclusion of global issues, and the self-interested gay, (generally) white, conspicuously-consuming male are all problematized here. The solution, it is widely suggested, is to be found in a coalitional style of politics, in an approach that puts queer issues into conversation with class issues across local and global scales.

It is these debates with which I am concerned. For I agree that we need to heed the warnings cautioning us to tread differently on the terrain of the capital-state-queer

relationship. And I even agree in general terms with the diagnosis of queer politics' failings; that is, I agree that we need to re-examine our local and narrowly-construed strategies and to take seriously the conspicuously-consuming gay subject. In sum, I agree that the power of the "good gay" must be undermined if a progressive queer politics is to endure. But the ways in which we might do so have yet to be exhausted. I argue that behind these debates lies a crisis for Anglo-American queer studies¹ and that the anxiety over the need to manage this crisis has heretofore put us in a difficult place from which to theorize. In what follows here, I map the ways in which resistance to the "new gay politics" has resulted in a prevailing wisdom that occludes questions and approaches that might enable us to take complicity more seriously.

Queer value vs. Queer values

"To what extent are critical queer perspectives products and promulgators of neoliberal visions of freedom, desire, value, and profit? To what extent does undermining neoliberal logic, in an effort to challenge globalization, also undermine queer criticism?" Bill Maurer (2002, 102) recently asked these rather disturbing questions. But they are by no means new ones. As long as queer theory has existed one of the most heated debates it has spawned has been that over the relationship between the "rhetorical" and the "real." Indeed, a critique that it has consistently had to weather – to what degree of success I will not judge here – has been that it emphasizes discourse and representation at the expense of the material. Well-known debates over one of the core texts of queer theory, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, are a case in point (see Fraser 1995; Nelson 1999). Critiques that Butler takes us too far into the realm of psychoanalysis and thereby inadequately

¹The debates that I refer to and critique throughout this chapter take place within a queer studies that is overwhelmingly Anglo-American in provenance and purview. Hereinafter when I use the term "queer studies" I intend it as a shorthand and want to make explicit that it is these specific debates that it addresses.

theorizes “real” constraints and depoliticizes theory have subsequently broadened into general concerns that an “anything goes” politics drives queer theory.

Given the ways in which homosexuality has found a certain degree of space within the state and capital of late, such critiques appear with increasing frequency and urgency. And perhaps most notably, they now hail from a variety of camps. No longer is concern over the discursive-material balance of queer theory solely the preserve of those who would rather see it displaced by a gay and lesbian studies focused explicitly on the politics of “liberation.” Now those sympathetic to and even heavily invested in queer theory increasingly voice concern and expend effort trying to bridge materialist/ Marxist perspectives with psychoanalytic or poststructural ones.²

So the debate has widened and there cannot be said to be one dominant view or even two opposing views on the question of homosexuality’s normalization/ incorporation and its consequences for queer studies. I note this diversity not because my goal is to negotiate between various positions or appraise their respective merits, but because I want to make clear that what I present here is to a certain extent a caricature and should be recognized as such. For what I am intrigued by is the fact that certain tropes seem to underpin the entire debate regardless of which theoretical position is being argued from. In particular, I in turn identify and scrutinize three common tropes in the literature: homomasculine privilege; the specters of the third world worker and the third world queer; and faith in coalition. I do so because the ways in which the debate is

² This statement is not meant to suggest agreement with the position that there *is* a hard and fast divide between materialist and poststructuralist perspectives that requires bridging. It merely comments upon the dominant perception of such a divide within queer studies and notes a trend towards new - ie. less acrimonious - ways of approaching it.

currently overdetermined by these tropes limits our ability to articulate new questions and arrive at new political strategies.

Homomasculine privilege

Judith Butler stated long ago that “heterosexuality does not have a monopoly on exclusionary logics” (1993b, 112). This assertion seems to have particular relevance today as many find that it applies to the gay, white, consuming male. It is argued that as the stigma of gayness declines, this figure can more fully take advantage of his class and race privileges. As outlined in chapter one, we see evidence of this in the logic of the IGF writers. Their vision of homosexual normalcy is premised upon an elitist gay male consumer culture that distinctly disregards the exploitation of others. Thus a wariness of a notion of gay and lesbian citizenship that is first realized in the economy is justifiable and necessary to a certain extent. But this very specific battle between queer theory/ politics and the “good gay” has fanned out to become a tendency to deride gaymaleness in general terms.

For instance, Rob Cover asserts that “the freedoms that capitalist society has brought about for the expression of lesbian/ gay desire apply only to white, middle-class males” (1999, 34). In similarly strong terms, Jacqui Alexander declares, “whiteness and masculinity operate together through a process of normalization that simultaneously erases lesbians, working class gay men, and lesbians and gay men of color of any class in order to produce [the] above average homosexual consuming citizen” (1998, 287). The benefits of gay and lesbian “liberation” then not only accrue disproportionately to this problematic subject, but his existence has become an obstacle preventing the potential emancipation of (perhaps more worthy) others. That he has gotten “in” keeps others

“out”; not least because “gay commercialism is trying to sell a romanticized view of an oppressed minority that can *spend* its way out of subjection” (Morton 1996, 473; emphasis in original). The myth of an affluent gay (and sometimes lesbian) community that is better off than most sectors of the population seems to undermine efforts to combat the very real discrimination and oppression that sexual minorities continue to face. As Alexandra Chasin states, “exchanges of capital, far from preserving and communicating identity, actually launder the social meanings out of money” (2000, 52). It seems that queer goals cannot be advanced when mixed with capital.

Thus queer theorists realize that capitalist hegemonies and the racialized, classed, and gendered hierarchies that support them are not necessarily heteronormative.

Alexander again:

gay capital mobilizes the same identity and operates through a similar set of assumptions as heterosexual capital. These systems not only mutually construct each other, but also simultaneously compete for a market each is willing to colonize. Both segments are engaged in nativizing and colonizing moves that I had assumed earlier were generated by processes of heterosexualization alone” (1998: 288).

Likewise Heidi Nast (2002) is troubled by what she terms “gay white patriarchies” that co-exist with and sometimes displace heteronormative ones in the service of established racialized processes of accumulation. Power has somewhere along the line been reconfigured. And the gay white consuming male has somehow landed on the wrong side of the oppression/ resistance divide.

The specters of the third world worker and the third world queer

That this problematic gay male is also cast as western brings us to the second trope, that of third world hauntings. The move to unveil homomasculine privilege is undertaken first, as I set out above, via the establishment of connections between the gay

white consuming male and the “others” whose freedom his actions preclude. This second trope aims to put the local in touch with the global and thereby expands the definition of these “others” to include the two typologies of the third world worker and the third world queer. The contention here is that whereas capitalism is a global system we cannot fully understand the damage the capitalized gay male does nor effectively undo it without identifying the connections between his local actions and their global consequences. As Rosemary Hennessy states, “many [of capitalism’s] contradictions are not seen or experienced as local instances of a global social system because the ways of knowing that are most available do not allow them to be understood this way” (2000, 6). So to unveil them we must examine our parochial concerns in light of their impact on the world. Only then will we know their full relevance.

Two outcomes result from this local-global conversation. The first is the linkage between the local consuming queer and the international division of labour. The argument here is that companies like Levi’s may provide same-sex spousal benefits in the US but they also utilize sweatshop labour in “the third world” (Hennessy 2000). In this case we must examine the role of consuming gays and lesbians in the perpetuation of global inequities for, as Cover argues, there is a “direct connection” between marketing to queer middle-class people in the West and the way “Third World people are subjected to the cruelest, most humiliating and most depriving means of existence” (1999, 36). That the purported affluence of gay people in the west rests heavily on the shoulders of a global working class, that gays and lesbians in the US are implicated in sweatshop labor and the inequitable world trade policy it rests upon requires that, as Joseph argues, we envision a “politics of scale and space that would refigure our understandings of *here*, of

who is here with us” (2002a, 174; emphasis in original). For her and others it is the presence of the anonymous third world worker that haunts expressions of queer community and politics at home. A progressive queer politics will therefore bring this specter out into the open.

Within this trope, a second powerful presence is that of the third world queer. He/she comes into view first as a possible third world worker. In this case it is argued that we must problematize “queer theory’s (First World) class politics based on privileging the category ‘desire’ and marginalizing the category ‘need’” (Morton 2001, 218), a critique that follows much along the lines I have already detailed above. But the third world queer is also invoked in another sense as the source of a queer heterogeneity that is in the process of being suffocated by the colonizing, market-driven, global (read: western) queer.

That a teleological march toward “the consolidation of public gay identities transnationally” has been underway since a gay culture linked to consumerism spread from the US after the 1969 Stonewall riots (Hennessy 2000, 109) is seen as limiting possibilities for the assertion of different kinds of queerness. In this vein, William Spurlin argues that “Western cultures have had the capital means to circulate queerness as a commodity and the economic power to appropriate emergent forms of queer cultural production outside the Euroamerican axis” (2001, 200). And Roberto Strongman decries the exportation of American gay culture and knowledge because it “has a universalizing and homogenizing effect that erases culturally distinct and politically enabling gender differences and options in poorer populations and among communities of color worldwide” (2002, 176). Without heterogeneity, so the story goes, the foundation for any

sort of queer resistance to globalization is eroded because the uniform global queer based on an American model “participate[s] in the logic of the commodity and help[s] support neoliberalism’s mystifications” (Hennessy 2000, 109).

In the face of the IGF’s profound parochialism, attempts to explicitly make connections between groups of people whose fates are bound in certain ways by the nature of capitalism is an important countermove. As I will argue later in this chapter, we must, however, be wary of the possibility of overstating the causal nature of these relationships and strive to consider all possible spaces of flows (and non-flows).

Faith in coalitional politics

Having thus identified the problems of homomale privilege and its global ramifications, conjecture abounds on the topic of what we should do to correct the situation. That the way back to a progressive queer politics seems so clearly to be that we should build coalitions that put gay and lesbian issues in touch with race, gender and above all class issues is the third trope I want to outline here. It seems that we have been working with and for the wrong people and so must change our alliances. As Peter Drucker states:

the most fruitful approaches to gay-lesbian liberation will probably be those that combine sexual radicalism with coalition-building, link gay-lesbian demands with strategies for broader social transformation, and build unitary left organizations alongside independent lesbian and gay groups. Left opposition to repression and discrimination, and left support for self-organization by oppressed people are the keys (1996, 101).

Cathy Cohen echoes this assertion as she envisions a new politics

where one’s relation to power, and not some homogenized identity, is privileged in determining one’s political comrades. I’m talking about a politics where the *nonnormative* and *marginal* position of punks, bulldaggers, and welfare queens, for example, is the basis for

progressive transformative coalition work (1997, 438; emphasis in original).

And with new alignments must also come new priorities. For “whereby race is understood in terms of the social allocation of advantage and disadvantage, queer theory has not been conflated with those theories which enable an understanding of class, exploitation, and sexuality on a broad transnational level” (Cover 1999, 31). So we must go back to class in some way or another that enables us to incorporate critiques of capitalism within our critiques of heteronormativity. As Joseph instructs us, it makes sense for “gays and lesbians to abandon a narrowly identarian framework and see it in “our” interests to join in battles to shift the balance of power against capital” (2002b, 93-4).

To clarify, I do not mean to suggest that arguments that we should think in more coalitional terms when considering strategies for gay and lesbian activism are completely misguided. Indeed, coalition building is necessary, especially in light of the single-issue focus of the “new gay politics.” It is the indordinate emphasis placed on this one strategy that I take issue with.

Taken together, these three tropes mark a series of relationships where none appeared to exist before. They recognize that “disconnection, like connection, implies a relation and not the absence of a relation” (Ferguson 1999, 238). They make explicit the existence of links between homomasculinism and the perpetuation of privilege on multiple grounds, between queerness and the structure of global capitalism and between the western consuming queer and certain non-western “others” while advocating that these problematic relationships may be re-routed if we consciously form new alliances across difference.

The existence of these connections I do not question. But the nature of the specific relations purported, the paths that these analyses follow, give me pause. For taken together, I suggest that the interrelated arguments that I have detailed here are fuelled by a sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit desire to rejuvenate some kind of authentic, non-capitalist, queer presumed to exist before the taint of acceptance clouded its articulation, a desire to assert a re-vamped, and somehow queerer, set of queer values in the face of queer value. These are grand claims and to substantiate them requires that I return to and critically re-read the arguments I have set out here; a task to which I now turn.

Homomascularity as stereotype and scapegoat

A recent small debate within the pages of *Antipode* has brought the issue of queer normalization, and the role of the gay white male at its core, firmly into queer geographies. As such, a close reading of this interchange facilitates an understanding of what this figure *does* to our knowledge claims about queerness in late capitalism.

Queer geography, like queer studies more broadly, has long seen itself as playing a pivotal role in the radicalization of the academy and the world by challenging the heteronormative underpinnings of both. As such, in their overview of the state of queer cultural geographies, Michael Brown and Larry Knopp (2003) optimistically assert "We're Here? We're Queer? We're Over There, Too!" as they chart the spread of queer geographies from relegation to a disciplinary urban ghetto of sorts to engagement with an array of topics such as citizenship, rural geographies, and globalization. Further, they implore queer geographers to tackle many more areas so that a deeper queering, and therefore radicalization, of our discipline might result.

But in "Queer Patriarchies, Queer Racisms, International," Heidi Nast (2002a) poses a challenge to this challenge. She outlines the possibility of a rather different queer legacy, one that is neatly encapsulated in the quotation from the feminist science fiction novel *Swastika Night* that she employs. It goes (in part) as follows:

"Married?" said Alfred. "I'm sorry, sir, that's a German word I don't know."

"It's a lost word. It occurs nowhere except in von Hess's book. Being married means living in a house with one woman and your children, and going on living continually with her until one of you dies. It sounds fantastic, doesn't it? That men ever lived with women. But they did." (quoted on p. 894-5)

No longer living with men, the women in this novel are secluded into breeding herds and ruled by men who consider male homosociality and male-male love superior. An incredible future, but one which Nast's polemic argues we not discount because "gay white male consumers and aesthetics are in" and "commodity patriarchy" is displacing "biologized patriarchy" in the current postindustrial order.

Unsurprisingly, Nast's depiction of queer radicality imperiled has not gone unremarked upon. While others have responded indirectly or in passing, Glen Elder (2002) and Matthew Sothorn (2004) have offered direct responses to her argument so I will confine my discussion of this debate to these three interventions.

In short, the broad strokes of all three arguments have merit. Nast usefully highlights the gradual normalization of "gayness" as consequential for sexuality and space studies. She rejects easy distinctions of queerness as always and everywhere progressive by demonstrating that "alternative" sexualities in certain manifestations may serve to deepen race, class and gender exploitation and domination. And queer geographies, an area of enquiry that has arguably failed to make racism, colonialism and patriarchy central enough to its project, may just need to hear Nast's (self-described)

“harsh” tone. Elder, in response, cautions against projecting “the” gay white male subject as an abstract and fixed rather than fluid, multiple, and ethnographically nuanced identity that is after all still “part of an oppressed minority” (989) and still a potentially radical figure. Sothorn echoes this critique to a certain extent but also takes it in a somewhat different direction by invoking the complications of an explicitly queer reading. He argues that Nast fails to consider the contradictions produced by the intersection of gay white male patriarchy and heterosexual patriarchy, contradictions that “might suggest that an earlier modality of patriarchy is put under pressure by the ironic masculinity circulated by gay men and butch women without necessarily being the means for consolidating a new patriarchy” (184). Thus leaving open the possibility for slippage, Sothorn points out that we can count neither on stable subjects nor on objective representations and so must explore the “cultural work” that the figure of gay white affluence does rather than assuming its alignment with contemporary capitalism.

While I am sympathetic to all three arguments in the general terms in which I have set them out here, taken together they leave me dissatisfied and uneasy. For what they, like debates over queer normalization more broadly, come down to at their core is a debate over not simply the affluent gay white male but the stereotype of the affluent gay white male – and stereotypes inevitably do so much more than we think they do.

“The act of stereotyping is always implicated in visibility” (Chow 2002, 66). Accordingly, as it deals at least in part with an unveiling of sorts, with seeing him in the right light, so is this debate. Though viewed differently, revelation of the truth of the affluent gay white male is at issue for all the authors.

Nast's argument hinges upon his definition. She states, "certain Euro White-identified gay men – relatively youthful, of some means, and typically childless – are well positioned to take advantage of key avenues of exploitation and profiteering in postindustrial world orders" (880). And while acknowledging that the issues she raises relate more explicitly to the "representation" of gay white maleness than to the "real" lives of gay white men, she insists that hegemonic representations speak to hegemonic desires and therefore cannot be dismissed as "non-representative of the ideals and practices in which 'real' people invest" (2002b, 839). Thus called into existence, the affluent gay white male quickly vanishes with Elder's retort that he is but a market fantasy rather than an actually existing group. The hold of Nast's fictive "queer patriarchs" on the popular imagination, he suggests, might more constructively be released through ethnographic study that would uncover "more complex and nuanced individuals" (989) than reinforced with anecdotal evidence. Sothern similarly argues that "Nast reinforces the disciplinary power of the stereotype" and highlights the importance of correcting the "misassumption" that "dominant representations are the self-expression of gay white men generally" (186).

But whereas undermining the stereotype is central to Elder's argument, Sothern renders this task peripheral to his. He states explicitly that his main focus is not to "present more 'accurate' representations" of the affluent gay white male and outlines instead a project for exploring the "cultural work" that this figure does. It is at this point that the arguments of both Nast and Sothern briefly converge. While all three authors invest to a certain degree in the affluent gay white male's being, Nast and Sothern (most explicitly) declare the establishment or disestablishment of his truth secondary to their

aims. For they recognize that for homomasculinism, as Edward Said notes in relation to that other 'ism' Orientalism, "one ought never to assume that [its] structure is nothing more than a structure of lies and myths which, were the truth to be told, would simply blow away" (1978, 6). Turning away from the emphasis on truth-telling, Nast and Sothern both follow Rey Chow's (2002) lead as she suggests that we move away from an empiricist, cognitive reading of stereotypes towards a more politicized, performative reading that considers not whether they are true or false but how they function as representational devices. They ask, in short, not what the affluent gay white male stereotype is but what it does.

Both authors answer this question very differently. Nast suggests that because "certain gay white men have been *colonized* by the market" (880; emphasis in original), white homomasculinist privilege bolsters, serves, and may even be on its way to displacing heteronormative racist capitalist patriarchies. The affluent gay white male spends his way out of subjection and into a position of culpability within a system based still on exclusion, just no longer his. Sothern, on the other hand, challenges what he characterizes as Nast's "very unqueer notion of queer masculinity" and argues that we re-read it through the "multiplicity, performativity and contradictions queer theory has struggled to theorize" (187). He states, a "unidirectional understanding of desire [such] as [that] offered by Nast flattens the messy intermediate spaces, and practices, between the production and consumption of these images where meaning is (re)produced" (187). Rejecting the appraisal of the affluent gay white male as a figure fixed by postindustrial capitalism, in Sothern's reading there may still be dissidence and destabilization where conservatism appears. The stereotype is thus recuperated as a potentially radical body.

To again invoke Rey Chow, she states that stereotypes, “rather than simply being false or incorrect (and thus dismissable), have the potential of effecting changes in entire intellectual climates” (63). Thus, rather than exploring the “cultural work” that images of homomasculine privilege do out in the world, as Nast and Sothern do, I want to explore a somewhat more reflexive line of enquiry by asking what this stereotype does to and for queer studies. Homi Bhabha characterizes the stereotype as “a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated” (1994, 66). I therefore wonder what is being anxiously repeated here and from whence this experience of anxiety stems?

To begin to answer this question, I go to where Nast and Sothern end up. For it is a surprisingly similar place given the very different paths their arguments take. The postindustrial normalization of gay white masculinity requires rethinking the meaning of queerness. Both commentators agree on this. For Nast, a new queer politics is to be found in “queer activist organizations of color” that take intersubjectivity seriously by consciously working across the lines of race, class, gender and sexuality. Sothern, while not rejecting the purported efficacy of such organizations, avoids proscription and argues that the location of queer politics cannot be determined a priori. He provocatively suggests that queer politics might already be happening where we least expect it and advocates greater attentiveness to the possibility of queer slippage from within the realm of the normal. Superficially, these are very different end points. But on closer inspection both arguments rely on a similar elision. Both cling to a notion of queer radicality that can exist outside complicity.

In Nast's case, her overwhelming emphasis on the affluent gay white male creates the fiction that he is always and indeed the only queer figure embroiled in a complicit relationship with postindustrial capitalism. "Other" gays and lesbians whose emancipation the actions of the affluent gay white male is argued to play a role in preventing are implicitly portrayed as anti- or at least non-capitalist in nature, as absolutely outside spaces of complicity, and therefore harkened to as the source of a rejuvenated queer politics. Sothern usefully complicates this argument by emphasizing that there might be other readings of the images Nast presents. He suggests that "oppositional appropriation" of dominant representations is possible and argues for example that the "commodity cowboy" that figures so prominently in Nast's argument might alternately be read as a parody or resignification/ subversion of heteromascularity. Thus the consuming and commodified affluent white gay male (and for that matter lesbian as he points out that she is also imbricated in the processes with which Nast is concerned) is re-written by Sothern as a still potentially destabilizing and resistant subject. In other words, though inextricably bound up with capitalist logics and practices, he is relocated from a space of absolute complicity to the constitutive outside, a space in which he is not necessarily complicit and can therefore still be queer.

That the affluent gay white male may be a body that in certain times and spaces subverts dominant representations through their re-appropriation is a productive intervention and one with which I do not take issue. Nor do I reject Nast's claim that "queer activist organizations of color" can do valuable work to undermine racist, sexist, capitalist and heterosexist logics and practices. But that both Nast and Sothern look to counter new capitalist gay (and lesbian) normalizations by insisting that there can be a

queer politics outside (whether absolutely or constitutively) complicity troubles me. First, I am not confident that such innocent spaces exist. And second, the maintenance of a distinction between non-complicit and complicit queers suggests (however unintentionally) a corresponding distinction between authentic and in-authentic queers. Here, I argue, comes into focus the work that the affluent gay white male's discursive adventures in both this small debate and the broader one to which it tangentially hinges does to and for queer studies.

Trinh T. Minh Ha states that “[a]uthenticity as a need to rely on an ‘undisputed origin,’ is prey to an obsessive *fear*: that of *losing connection*. Everything must hold together” (1989, 94; emphasis in original). And hold together everything does. For the anxious invocation of a non-complicit, authentic queer provides a way out of the threat that gay (and lesbian) normalization within postindustrial capitalism poses to queer studies. Dorinne Kondo estimates that working through stereotypes is “risky business” (1995); an apposite assessment in this case as the deployment of the trope of homomasculine privilege mitigates risk. But it simultaneously opens these debates up to new risks. For “it might well be argued that studies [written within an authorizing Western discourse on] the domination of dominant discourses merely add to their totalizing effects” (Sharpe 1989, 137). A discourse such as homomasculinism may be given too much weight when its opponents buy into it too wholeheartedly and attribute it too much explanatory power. While offering an escape route that relieves us of the task of grappling with complicity's complications for queer theory, the preoccupation with a purported causal relationship between homomasculine privilege and queer normalization prevents us from uttering (much less answering) the difficult question, might queer

radicality still be possible in a state of complicity from which we cannot ever fully be divorced and which we cannot always and everywhere assume to subvert through re-appropriation?

The postcolonial alibi

That there is a relationship between queerness and globalization has been much remarked upon in recent years. Gay ghettos in world cities, queer cyberspaces, pink tourism, and transnational lobbying for human rights for sexual minorities are but some of the topics covered by new literatures within queer studies concerned explicitly with the global scale. Thus it is not surprising that debates over the normalization of queerness taking place in western localities should gesture towards “the global.” But “the global” and “the local” as well as the connections between them are thinly and problematically wrought here. For queer globalizations appear as discrete, overarching, monolithic entities that emanate from the core/ west to the periphery/ rest while colonizing, assimilating and “impacting on” all in their paths. One of the aims of the global queer studies literature as it has emerged in recent years has been to arrive at more nuanced renderings of the global and the local and the way in which they play out within queer globalizations. I turn now to not only a reading of some of the ways in which the global and local have been re-worked in this literature but to a critique that might productively push forward both these renderings and the queer normalizations debate to which they are more than tangentially related.

Foucault’s genealogical approach to the history of sexuality has taught us well that the “homosexual” is not an essential, transhistorical category but an identity and object of analysis that came discursively into being in particular places and times. The

purported exportation of this identity from the “west” to the “rest” has likewise produced a new category; the “global gay.” Any tracing of his (and the use of the masculine pronoun is intentional for we rarely speak of the “global lesbian” and when we do she is implied within or added onto the term “global gay”) emergence would have to include a look at Dennis Altman’s (1997) influential essay “Global Gaze/ Global Gays” as a pivotal moment in the announcement of his presence. In it, Altman tries to make sense of what he observes as expressions of “western-style” gayness outside the west and launches an agenda of sorts for global queer studies as an undertaking that must carefully explore the workings of global/ local, western/ non-western, and traditional/ modern binary relationships as gayness globalizes. In other words, he asserts the importance of looking at the way in which homosexual identities are diffused at the global scale.

For Altman, this process of diffusion is somewhat straightforward. As he neatly claims in a later essay, “the images and rhetoric of a newly assertive gay world spread rapidly from the United States and other Western countries after 1969” (2001b, 29). What look like “western-style” expressions of gayness are, in his analysis, exactly that. In Asia – the (rather broad) locale from within which the bulk of his empirical evidence comes – Altman finds that “self-identified homosexuals” view themselves as part of a common “global community.” These new gays embrace modernity in a move that is read as being just as much about embracing a western identity as it is about embracing a sexual one. Despite this growing commonality, Altman seeks however to allay fears of homogenization via cultural imperialism by arguing against the notion that what is occurring is an inexorable march towards “development” that will find an end point in the proliferation of western-style gay ghettos across the globe.

The reasons behind his optimistic non-teleological reading are two-fold. First, with many people in non-western countries choosing not to adopt western sexual identities, alternative local expressions of homosexual cultures and identities survive. Second, and the central point of Altman's intervention, adaptation mitigates the impact of these external identities on non-western cultural formations. He states:

The ways in which the new gay groups of Asia, South America, and Africa will adapt ideas of universal discourse and western identity politics to create something new and unpredictable – these will be the interesting developments (1997, 433).

Finding diversity in the process of adaptation, Altman does not echo the fear of a teleological march towards global queer homogeneity. Nonetheless, there is still much to critique in Altman's argument since, despite usefully disrupting deterministic temporal narratives, space and spatiality thus remain largely fixed. In concert with the normalization debates, he casts the west (read: global) as actor and innovator and the non-west (read: local) as impacted on from above.

The "from-Stonewall-diffusion-fantasy"³ that grounds Altman's work has been thoroughly discredited. It is now widely recognized that queer innovations have multiple origins and that non-western queer cultures are therefore not tethered to the west for their existence. But this recognition alone has not complicated conceptualizations of the global and the local enough. As a look at some of the work written in more or less direct critique of Altman demonstrates, the centre still holds in much of the global queer studies literature.

Altman has by no means been the only proponent of the view that queer's globalization does not necessarily entail the transformation of sexual subcultures around

³ This is Paola Bacchetta's (2002) term.

the world into exact replicas of western-style gayness (whatever such a thing might be). Scholar after scholar has ventured out into various fields to return with evidence of existing heterogeneous expressions of queerness. These mappings have calmed western queer theorists' fears that "they" are becoming just like "us" and moved us even more firmly beyond teleology. Arriving at the same conclusion that Altman does, these re-readings of the terrain of homosexuality's global diversity however often tell rather different stories about who "they" are and from whence this persistent global variety stems. How "they" move, however, looks much the same.

That the world is turning gay – a fact stated with great conviction by Altman – is a claim with which many find fault. As Peter A. Jackson declares:

Research by Western gay men and lesbians on homoeroticism in the rest of the world often seems to be motivated by concerns similar to those which lie behind the search for extraterrestrial life. A dominant but unspoken question guiding such research is: "Is there someone else out there like me?" (2001, 9-10).

One of the researchers about whom Jackson speaks is Altman; and appositely so. Despite making qualifications that some non-westerners make western-style gay identities into something else via adaptation and that many other "others" maintain traditional identities, his point is fundamentally about sameness. Pitting western-style gayness against traditional local homosexual practices, there can only be "us" and "them," only a universal identity or an absolute difference. For Altman, unless "they" are traditional, "they" must be modern. "They" thus become "us" and diversity stems merely from "their" variation on "our" theme.

That “other” queers are not merely localized derivatives of the universalized western Queer is a claim substantiated by the unveiling of new categories of gayness.⁴ As many scholars find something other than western-style gayness or mere indigenous homosexualities “out there” – something not just diverse but different – Altman’s mapping of modern and traditional onto western and non-western is abandoned. For instance, in his research on Thai homosexual discourses and practices, Jackson finds that though gay and lesbian styles and terminologies have often been “appropriated as strategies to resist local heteronormative strictures and carve out new local spaces,” these appropriations do not reflect “a wholesale recreation of Western sexual cultures in Asian contexts. Instead they suggest a selective and strategic use of foreign forms to create new ways of being Asian *and* homosexual” (2001, 5, emphasis in original). That it is thus possible to be both not western *and* homosexual has transformed the search for more of “us” around the world into a desire to understand “them.”

The existence of terms like *tongzhi* in China and *rezubian* in Japan, terms that following Altman’s logic could only represent transliterations, are thus re-read as signs of culturally-specific modes of being whose meaning must be interrogated rather than assumed. Considering one such appellation, Martin Manalansan, for instance, argues that “bakla” – a term used in the Philippines and the Filipino diaspora to refer to men who have sex with men – “is not a prior condition before assimilating into gay identity” (2003, 186). Instead, it is “equally a modern sense of self” (186) that goes “beyond the strictures of a white gay mode of living” (191). It is, in this analysis, a new category that should be

⁴ For the purpose of argument, I here read certain works within global queer studies to be representative of what I caricature as a narrative of difference in opposition to Altman’s narrative of diversity. Though I set out this typology through an exploration of only a few selected works, see also: La Fountain-Stokes, 2002; Manalansan, 1997; McLelland, 2000; Murray, 2001; and Strongman, 2002.

properly understood outside some imaginary relationship to a universal or western gay identity. Chou Wah-Shan likewise distinguishes “tongzhi” – literally meaning “comrade” and referring to homosexuals in China and within Chinese communities throughout Southeast Asia – as a category distinguishable from western modes of gayness since it is an identity grounded in the maintenance of the family-kinship system rather than erotic object choice (2001).

Casting cultural specificity in a slightly different light are narratives of hybridity that read certain iterations of queerness in the non-west as meldings of western and non-western homosexual identities. Chong Kee Tan (2001), for instance, narrates the rise of gay and lesbian discourse in present-day Taiwan as a process of cultural negotiation between contemporary and traditional values and indigenous and foreign theories and practices. And given cultural change and exposure to ideas coming from the US, Hector Carillo asks “can we assume that Mexicans are abandoning the traditional perceptions of homosexual identities and adopting more global, contemporary ones?” (1999, 227) His answer is an ambivalent “yes and no” for he sees hybridization at work. In these examples, less distinct lines are drawn between the west and the non-west. The emergence of new identities through the process of hybridization are read not as western or non-western but as both and neither simultaneously. Merging rather than trumping takes place.

While Altman’s Americanization thesis allows only one modern (read: western) gay identity that can do nothing other than either trump or exist alongside a set of pre-existing traditional (read: non-western) homosexualities, gay and lesbian identity categories proliferate limitlessly when read as either culturally specific or as

hybridizations since neither reading pins the modern or the traditional in place. Altman's argument against a progress narrative is enhanced by the removal of the lines between the anachronistic and the contemporary and the possibility that both can be found in the non-west, either through specifically non-western trajectories or via recombination with western identities. As time becomes labile, the supposition of a universal gayness manifesting itself in locally-relevant forms is replaced by the recognition of distinct differences between modes of being queer in various locales. This reconfiguration "forc[es] us to see Western eroticisms not as *the* model but as one set of historically specific forms besides many others" (Jackson 2001, 7).

These new identities simultaneously force us to see routes of diffusion other than that from the west to the rest. Jackson (2001), for instance, disrupts the western origin story by retracing the historical development of gay scenes in Bangkok and Manila. Finding that they developed contemporaneously with those in western metropolitan areas, he contends that the west cannot therefore be the original site of contemporary gay and lesbian identities. Along similar lines, Antonia Chao takes the west out of global processes of queer diffusion through an emphasis on intra-non-western flows. Because similarities in lesbian sex role identities emerged in various Southeast Asian countries around the same time and the Hong Kong-originated term *Tongzhi* "propagated instantly to nearly all Chinese societies in Southeast Asia", she asserts that these "transnational pattern[s] of sexual cultural products...cannot be subsumed under the paradigm of Altman's more narrowly conceived model of Americanization" (2000, 383).

Such assertions of non-western origins and flows combine with the shift in emphasis from the presumption of the appearance of western-style gayness in the non-

west to the revelation of a multitude of different sexual orders to deprivilege the west in these re-writings of global gayness and its travels. But to deprivilege is not necessarily to decentre and regarding the achievement of this latter task, these narratives of difference, hybridity, non-western origins and intra-non-western flows fall short. In their work on “queer diffusion,” Larry Knopp and Michael Brown implore us to recover “the unique strengths and dignities of places and environments that have been unfairly stigmatized as ‘backward’” (2003, 423). By challenging the thesis that innovations in queer politics and culture occur only in the west and are transferred to “other” places, the excavation of different erotic economies around the globe does this. Thereby it goes a long way to countering colonizing notions of non-western queer transformations from unliberated, pre-political homosexual practices to liberated, out, politicized gay subjectivities. While Altman found only diverse expressions of a circumscribed gayness alongside transhistorical indigenous homosexualities, the other modes of decolonizing queer studies at the global scale that I have laid out here allow for multiple categories. Having undermined the view that western eroticism is *the* model, we can now imagine the simultaneous existence of many. As categories and models proliferate, so do centres. Herein lies the problem. For to queer diffusion, Knopp and Brown also assert that we must recognize the ways in which different places shape each other “in a complex, multilateral, and diffuse process of mutual constitution, rather than through a more hierarchical process” (2003, 422). But what happens here is the hierarchical re-ordering of what remain distinct spheres. Revisiting each of the examples given above reveals the problematics of this manoeuvre.

Manalansan's description of bakla as "not a prior condition before assimilating into gay identity" and "equally a modern sense of self" rescues this identity from the stigmatization and reification that its labeling as traditional could potentially impose. He gives it value as a contemporary site of queer innovation in its own right, and helpfully so. But what is the "white gay mode of living" that he suggests the bakla identity goes "beyond"? Why does the destigmatization of and recognition of the fluidity inherent within the bakla identity occur alongside the perpetuation of the myth that there is a knowable, coherent and decidedly not fluid western gayness? Why does the bakla come into being performatively as it "dwells in the queer sites of the global city" (2003, 186) while white gayness seems fixed in abstract space? Might not the non-western and western containers that the bakla and white gayness are portrayed respectively to fit neatly within leak?

Prying the west and non-west apart in similar fashion, Chou declares, "the focus of the *tongzhi* movement is not an isolated self called gay, lesbian, or bisexual, but the family and the social relations that both constitute and oppress *tongzhi*" (2001, 34; emphasis in original). His desire to set apart this category stems from the "need to build up indigenous *tongzhi* politics" since Anglo-American experience tends to be universalized and "imposed on" other cultures (27). But might the desire to resist the imposition of western queer experience not artificially bound this new category? And further, might its own colonial tendencies be elided? In her exploration of T-Po identities – identities revolving around butch-femme distinctions – in Taiwan, Chao argues that feminist lesbian *tongzhi* activists deride T-Po identities as traditional and anachronistic and represent "a cultural elite eager to be adopted into the global community of

‘comrades’ [the literal translation of ‘tongzhi’ and a reference to gays and lesbians]” (2000, 387). She states, “state and feminist lesbians have constructed a subaltern class that can self-evidently highlight their global (and thus non-People’s Republic of China) authenticity” (387). In this light, might the global not be an imaginary that mutually constitutes all scales and can be found in all places?

Readings of queerness at the global scale through the analytic of hybridity, which the work of Chong and Carillo exemplify, wisely render the trumping of local subjectivities by global identities impossible. But in the proposition that global and local/ western and non-western/ modern and traditional identities can be combined to produce something new, their a priori existence is assumed. Even though lines get crossed to form the hybrid, might there be another way of casting global queer subjectivities without maintaining previously distinct and definable identity categories?

Jackson’s call to stop searching for sameness beyond the west has been well heeded. But even in proliferation, categories still do the work of categories. They cannot but be arbitrary and limiting, fictive and occluding. In this case, their multiplication serves the purpose of attributing value and the power to innovate to groups previously read only as throwbacks in urgent need of updating. However, in the desire to “abandon the expectation, or hope, that Asian [or other non-western] g/l/t people are becoming like “us” [so that] it will be possible to begin seeing “them” for who “they are” (Jackson 2001, 10), many seem to have overlooked the fundamental violence of this new project of “knowing” “them”; and, not incidentally, “us”.

In the eagerness to de-colonize queer studies at the global scale and better our understanding of non-western homosexualities, various problematic analytical moves

have been perpetuated; moves that mirror those made in the writing of the global-local relationship in queer normalization debates. Though collapsing distinctions between the modern and the traditional and allowing for the merging of western and non-western identities, two overriding and interrelated separations persist; those of the west from the non-west and the global from the local.⁵ Recuperated as unique and autonomous, non-western queerness is trapped in a local sphere that can at best only mitigate the effects of an imposing western queerness that looms globally as a threatening cultural force.

Innovations in non-western contexts are over-emphasized and romanticized as resistant while the global queerness that they are purportedly resisting the imposition of is rendered in only ambiguous, though strong, terms. Thus our newly proliferated categories are severely constrained.

And so are the ways in which their flows can be conceptualized. Jackson and Chao's respective propositions that gay scenes can originate autonomously in the non-west and that intra-non-western flows are consequential and important insights. But they likewise represent multiplications instead of transformations. In each strategy inheres a desire to distinguish the non-west from the west that leaves the western core intact while asserting the existence of other centres in the non-west. Though now having multiple sources, uni-directionality of flows persists. Innovations in the west still flow to the non-west but rather than being straightforwardly adapted, these locales are now recognized as centres in their own right and have the power to resist or at least mitigate global impositions. Consonance with Altman here emerges as he states:

if we abandon the idea that the model for the rest of the world – whether

⁵ The discussion that closes out this section of the chapter is heavily informed by work within critical human geography that challenges the global and the local as well as the notion of geographical scale itself as ontological categories. For example: Hart 2002a; Marston 2000; Mitchell 1997b.

political, cultural, or intellectual – need be New York or Paris, and if we recognize the emerging possibilities for such models in Bangkok and Harare, we may indeed be able to speak of a “queer planet” (1997, 433).

There is no reason to presume that flows from these models are anything but downward. The drawing of lines between the west and non-west and global and local allows only the global – which resides “out there” in the west – to flow to the non-west and the new non-western centres – that develop in place locally – to act as general innovators for both national and perhaps regional developments.

The overriding problem with conceptualizations of the global and the local within both global queer studies and queer normalization debates is simply their self-evidence; a trait which allows us to see only certain flows between these too discretely understood spheres. Our attachment to the fiction that we know the global queer or the third world queer/ worker and the full extent of their relationships with each other is problematic. For, in Paul Gilroy’s words, “the desire to fix identity in the body is inevitably frustrated by the body’s refusal to disclose the required signs of absolute incompatibility people imagine to be located there” (2000, 104). And so to be mindful, as Joseph implores us to be, of “who is here with us” requires a more in depth examination than recourse to these simple categories permits. We can and should make the connections between the western consuming queer and the promulgation of inequitable trade policies, but there are more connections to be made. Ones that will perhaps make us less comfortable and less sure of our analyses; connections such as those between certain third world queers and capitalist consumption, or between some gay white consuming males and feminism, or between certain third world workers and homophobia, and so many more.

But heeding this advice brings with it a further set of complications. Trinh T.

Minh Ha argues that:

To survive, "Third World" must necessarily have negative *and* positive connotations: negative when viewed in a vertical ranking system – "underdeveloped" compared to over-industrialized, "underprivileged" within the already Second sex – and positive when understood sociopolitically as a subversive, "non-aligned" force" (1989, 97).

The "third world" invoked here is positioned similarly. It is simultaneously in need of rescue by the west and its potential saviour. For by setting up some sort of commodity chain leading from the conspicuously consuming white gay western male to the subjected third world worker and/ or queer these identities are flattened in such a way that the "absolute incompatibility" or non-complicity sought after at the end of this chain can be claimed as a foil for the western queer's complicities which are supposed to cause the third world worker's/ queer's hardships in the first place. This postcolonial line of critique thereby becomes an alibi. By keeping "others" in their frames we can maintain hope that something different is possible and keep western queer fears about being trapped within limiting frames at bay. This trope is, like the first, another escape route that allows us not to take complicity seriously. It allows us to place blind faith in a post-colonial state of being that is presumed to somehow supercede the colonial and thereby ignore all of the complicated ways in which residues of the colonial are brought forward. Our characterizations of the global queer and queer globalizations as overarching and "impacting on" have allowed us to ask only certain questions. I wonder what other ones we might begin to voice if we were to start thinking about global queerness as always multiply scaled and flowing in multiple and unpredictable directions.

Beyond the coalition

So the scapegoating of the gay white consuming male and the retreat to an abstract global sphere where uni-dimensional subjects connect in predictable ways are interrelated attempts to elude the implications and complications wrought by queer complicity with the state and capital. Such an analytical framework – one that implies that there can be a space outside complicity, indeed outside power – unsurprisingly breeds political strategies that purport to find such spaces. In this light, the prevalence of the suggestion that this situation can best, and perhaps only, be undone by working in coalition and across difference makes a great deal of sense; especially given the particular efficacies such strategies are attributed in the context of these debates.

As I have argued, it seems that to recognize that queer complicities exist is one thing but to admit that they are unavoidable is another. For instance, even Joseph (2002), whose work is exceptional within the literature I have examined here because she goes furthest in her appraisal of the extent of queer complicity to suggest that “community” is always supplemental to – rather than outside of – capital, retreats from her own analysis. She states:

In contesting capitalist exploitation, then, we must trace this complicity and evaluate our cultural practices, our communal practices, for the complex ways they simultaneously enable but can also be *enacted to disable* the circulation and expansion of capitalism (169; emphasis mine).

This brings her to the conclusion that working across difference in various ways – be they resisting the World Trade Organization by joining the anti-globalization movement or offering queer studies courses that also articulate the concerns of, rather than existing alongside, ethnic studies, women’s studies, etc. – is the strategy we should deploy.

I do not want to suggest that queerness cannot both enable and disable capitalist exploitation. But to make the claim that queer's disabling effects can be "enacted" relies on a presumption that its enabling effects can be disengaged. Such a contention is problematic on two fronts: first, its faith in "disengagement" entails reliance on a significant amount of intentionality and instrumentality; and, second, it sets up these "disabling" and "enabling" processes as distinct and mutually exclusive – a move that implies that complicity can be avoided.

Another example. The edited collection *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the afterlife of colonialism* deals in large measure with the queer-capital-state relationship I am concerned with here. In their introduction to the collection, its editors, Arnaldo Cruz-Malave and Martin Manalansan, articulate a desire to "queer" globalization that runs throughout the contributions. They state:

these essays seek to foreground the complicity, rather than the contradiction, between the ethical values of domination embedded in the structures of home, nationalism, and religious belonging and the putatively value-free values of global economic expansion...[T]he mutual complicity of the terms of this binary could offer queer activism enough reflexive distance not to have to fix its allegiances with either side of the binary (2002b, 7).

They make two contradictory moves here. First they call attention to the inevitable imbrication of the political, the cultural, and the economic; and by implication, of queerness, capital, and the state. Then they go on to suggest that "queer" exists (or potentially can exist) outside this nexus, that "queer activism might then function as a local yet global, mobile third term that could transform the opposition without transcending it" (7). And for many of the contributors to the volume, coalitional strategies are *the way forward, the way to initiate this transformation.*

But queerness does not operate solely as a necessarily progressive mobile; liminal metaphor. It functions materially as a political, economic, and cultural entity that is inevitably pinned down and embodied as, for instance, a fetishized commodity and a rights-bearing identity. As such, we cannot dismiss Foucault's reminder that, "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (1990, 95). That a queer studies for which this realization has been integral has suddenly dismissed it is an indication that we must also recall another of Foucault's insights. That is, that "[f]ar from preventing knowledge, power produces it" (1980, 59). Queer theory's legitimacy is threatened by queer's normalization and its imbrication in these power relations has produced a state of anxiety. Such a place is a difficult one from which to theorize.

Sexual identities and actually existing queer globalizations

To get out of this state of anxiety so that we may begin to ask other questions that it currently occludes, I argue that a more self-consciously geographical perspective is crucial. My critique of the debates I have dealt with here can be distilled into two points. First, that there is a tendency within them to want to do the impossible and escape complicity. And second, that they rest upon the assumption that there is one global queer under one global capitalism and that our goal should simply be to undermine both. But if we make more careful spatial presumptions we can let go of these theoretical life rafts without letting go of the progressive potential of queerness that they so desperately try to sustain.

So the first task is to do away with the binary presumption that drives the belief in the ability to escape complicity. This binary can be articulated in various ways. But

whether it pits complicity against complication, capitulation against resistance or appropriation against threat, the maintenance of the separation of the first set of terms from the second would require that we buy into the notion that each of these terms exists in pure space, on one side or the other of some fixed dividing line. In other words, to capitulate is categorically *not* to be resistant and to be a threat is *not* to be appropriated. This is what we have to believe if these binaries are to be maintained. But these are fictions that are simply unsustainable.

We need to take complicity more seriously within queer studies. But, so that we might do so in a manner that will allow us to avoid becoming entangled in a cycle characterized by the castigation of purported sell-outs of the queer cause followed by the (necessary) reclamation of queer identity in reaction to this circumscription, we must think it differently. Instead of thinking complicit space as total and negative, we might reconceptualize it as ambivalent and porous, as an undetermined set of processes that simultaneously enables both resistance and capitulation. Sothorn opens up an important alternate reading when he argues that though “Lesbian advertising images...may commodify lesbian masquerade as legitimate high-style fashion,...lesbians are free to politicize these products or reappropriate them with other products/ fashions to act as new signifiers for lesbian identification or ironic commentaries on heterosexual culture” (188). Indeed, she may do so and this is a possibility I do not want to surrender. But, that she also may not is a possibility I want us to simultaneously account for. If both resistance and capitulation are enabled in and through complicity then a complicit queerness can still present a threat. But it is not the threat we thought it was, we may have

to look harder and in different, unforeseen places to detect it, and we may not always like what we find.

The second task is to change the way we think about the global – specifically its global queer and global capitalist iterations – in the context of these debates. I began a preceding section with a quotation from Bill Maurer who muses, “[t]o what extent are critical queer perspectives products and promulgators of neoliberal visions of freedom, desire, value, and profit? To what extent does undermining neoliberal logic, in an effort to challenge globalization, also undermine queer criticism?” (2002, 102). But, as I argue above, these sorts of enquiries are articulated within debates that are based on flawed premises. They are shot through with problematic knowledge claims purporting the existence of authentic, resistant queers capable of instrumentally disabling the overarching, colonizing, and western-centric entities of global capitalism and global queerness by forming coalitions of the oppressed. They attempt to escape what is perceived as the poverty of a queerness in complicity. So I want to change the way we think about the global by asking a different set of questions. I ask, are critical queer perspectives neoliberal due to an implicit acceptance that globalization is an overarching, technocratic, assimilating force? How might we undermine this logic? And how would doing so undermine not only globalization but queer criticism itself? The answers to these questions I think are as follows.

In response to the first question, I think the answer bluntly stated is yes. Critical queer perspectives do buy into the dominant narrative that global capital tells about itself; that it is an overarching, technocratic, assimilating force and that it determines us and we can but react.

In answer to the second question, we might undermine this logic simply by thinking about the global more carefully. The insistence within these debates that queer scholarship must be simultaneously global and local is a valuable one. But how we invoke these terms is exceedingly consequential. The debates around the normalization of queerness with which I have been concerned here undertake the task of making new connections where none were assumed to exist before. But the suggestion that there are discrete, identifiable 'local' and 'global' realms must give way if we are to make more than superficial connections between these two terms. We might instead think "the local [as] often constituted through the global, and vice versa" (Grewal and Kaplan 2001, 671). As Bacchetta states, "it might be most fruitful to address all possible scales, even when pinpointing only one. Perhaps transnational queerness could be reimagined in terms of a thickly historicized, contextualized, rescaled transversality" (2001, 953).

Having thought the global differently, we might then approach the third question I re-posed above. I ask how vanquishing queer theory's "neoliberal" underpinnings might undermine not only globalization but queer criticism itself. And I answer that it need not as long as we are comfortable being a threat in complicity.

The suggestion that once we have unveiled the truth of queerness under capitalism we can instrumentally change it is based on its own set of lies, lies that queer theorists have told themselves in a state of anxiety. Undoing them so that we might ask the questions and explore the lines of enquiry they occlude requires that we pay attention not to what capitalism hides, but to what it makes visible if only we look. Wendy Brown states, "paradox designates a condition in which resolution is the most uninteresting aim" (1995, 100). In this vein, the relationship between queer economic and political

citizenship is most productively conceptualized not as a contradiction to be resolved but as a set of accumulations to be unraveled. Our attention should therefore rest beyond the end.

In this chapter I have attempted to re-focus our gaze thus by intervening, in intentionally polemical fashion, in debates over the normalization of queerness. In placing strictures on where queer radicality can be found, these debates are an act of normalization in and of themselves. They inadvertently blunt the force of queer critique while trying to salvage it. In the chapters that follow, I take this theoretical argument to "the field" and offer a more expansive reading of queerness in the South African context than current prevailing wisdom on the dangers of normalization would allow.

Before getting on to these subsequent chapters, a reiteration of the rationale behind the choice of site with which they are preoccupied is called for. As I stated in chapter one, if we are to make a shift from the condemnation of queer normalization to alternate readings that complicate the ways in which we think complicity and the global-local relationship, we must simultaneously make another more literal move. That is, we must venture outside the west in a manner more concrete than our current pronouncements of sympathy entail. But as we do so we must be careful to heed Aihwa Ong's advice. She states, "[w]e need to attend to how places in the non-west differently plan and envision the particular combinations of culture, capital, and the nation-state, rather than assume that they are immature versions of some master western stereotype." This means accepting that where we find evidence of what looks like that familiar sign of global queerness, it may not be western and it may still be "queer". It means acknowledging that where we think we find evidence of remnants of an authentic "other"

queerness outside capitalist complicity, we may be missing something. It means we must be willing to let go of knowledge claims that comfort us in the face of our own complicity to explore the complicated ways in which queerness comes up against the state, capital, competing modernities, neo-colonialisms and the like outside the west.

To be clear, I am not arguing that we need two different frames for understanding the state-capital-queer relationship, one western and one non-western. Such an argument would assume that the typologies of the western and the non-western queer actually exist. Rather we need to overhaul our guiding questions completely and continually adapt them so that they speak to whatever context might be at hand and so that they can grasp the tensions and contradictions – stemming in part from connections with other places – that shape the places we study.

CHAPTER III

Exclusion in "gay Cape Town"

If you postulate an either-or choice between Africa and the west, there is no place for you in the real world of politics.

-Kwame A. Appiah

Demand must be created for cultures as for products...or else supply will be threatened.

-Simon Anholt, Marketing Consultant

As Sheryl Ozinsky, Manager of Cape Town Tourism, states, "the pink rand is worth millions." Thus Cape Town is a hopeful contender for the title "queerest city in the world."¹ Originally the initiative of a few private gay or gay-friendly tour companies wanting to capitalize on the "new" South Africa's queered constitution, now an official facet of the City of Cape Town's "Tourism and Marketing Strategy,"² brand "Gay Cape Town"³ grows stronger with each passing post-apartheid year. The product on offer is simply this:

¹ Currently ranked fifth among preferred destinations for gay tourists in the international Gay travel guide Spartacus, the mandate of the Mother City Queer Project – and one which Cape Town tourism and other gay and lesbian tourist promoters are on board with – is to make Cape Town the "queerest city in the world." Speech made by Andre Vorster to the Cape Town Press Club, December 2002.

² Draft document "Tourism Marketing Strategy and Institutional Proposals for the Western Cape, Cape Town and Regions." Posted at: <http://www.jmi.co.za/tourdocs/FinalTourismMarketingStrategy_part1.doc> Accessed January 9, 2003. Additionally, the national tourism marketing board, South African Tourism, has recently expressed an interest in developing a "Gay South Africa" strategy.

³ Generally, consumers of "pink tourism" opportunities are overwhelmingly male. As my usage of the term "gay Cape Town", rather than the more inclusive "gay and lesbian Cape Town", throughout this chapter attests to, that general rule holds in this case. Thus, its consideration provides a response to the trope of "homomascuine privilege" that I problematized in Chapter one. However, it should be noted that many of most influential promoters of the marketing initiative "gay Cape Town" have in fact been lesbians, and lesbians who are often very forthright about their positionality as women. One such woman had this to say about working with gay male counterparts to make "gay Cape Town" a success: "They don't value the competencies that women bring to the table... they don't value level-headed, nurturing qualities because quite frankly they are queens... They're drama queens, they're much more emotional than the average lesbian woman and they don't necessarily make the best decisions as a result." In addition, these lesbian marketers of "gay Cape Town" are generally interested in diversifying its consumer base to include a much

A cosmopolitan city with friendly people, breathtaking scenery and far too much to see and do in just one visit. An idyllic holiday destination offering incredible value for money, international standards and the friendliest Gay City in Africa (*Cape Gay Guide* 2002, 1).

The by now legendary – though arguably fallacious (see Gluckman and Reed 1997; Badgett 2001) – high-spending, oft-traveling, trend-setting queer traveler can take advantage of Cape Town's proven tourist draws – its beaches, shopping, winelands, whale watching, cultural diversity, and attractions – while being assured a non-discriminatory environment and the opportunity to support and participate in a thriving gay and lesbian scene and business network.

This marketing initiative is but one of many possible examples of the phenomenal growth in global queer tourism in recent years. As Jasbir Puar notes, “gay and lesbian tourists account for at least 10 percent of the U.S. travel industry, and that percentage is growing”. Yet, she continues, “queer tourism is one of the least researched or discussed topics in scholarly venues (2002c, 1). Though this claim could still be truthfully made, the literature on queer tourism studies has discernibly grown. And some of it has advanced a much-needed critical perspective. In particular, queer tourism has been explored for its neocolonial impulses and the ways in which it occludes questions of gender. As Puar, in a rejection of celebratory responses to the fact that queers are now valued as cosmopolitan, mobile, consuming subjects in diverse locales, writes, “while it is predictable that the claiming of queer space is lauded as the disruption of heterosexual space, rarely is this disruption seen as a disruption of racialized, gendered, and classed

greater number of women, “because the circuit queen doesn't stay on beyond the party. They come two days before the party and they leave a day or two after the party and that's it. So the product we offer has to cater to a diverse, wide-ranging audience.”

spaces, nor is it seen in tandem with a claiming of class, gender, and racial privilege as well" (2002d, 112).

In the context of South Africa, a critical approach to queer tourism studies along the lines of that advocated by Puar is taken up in appraisals of "gay Cape Town" by Glen Elder and Gustav Visser (Elder 2004, forthcoming; Visser 2002, 2003). Both authors are concerned with the ways in which the initiative to market the city as a gay destination has created a "segregated space of exclusion" (Elder 2004, 579). As Elder states, the space of "gay Cape Town" caters to the "consuming patterns of white masculine metropolitan privilege" (Elder 2004, 583). And in Visser's words:

despite much optimism, those spaces that have subsequently developed as 'gay space' have not generated new opportunities for all homosexual South Africans; rather these remain spaces of consumption that continue to reflect the desires of white, wealthy, gay men, largely built on the legacy of the apartheid space economy (2003, 169).

These are serious concerns and they are ones for which I have much sympathy. Nonetheless, I am not entirely convinced of the claims that these authors make. Tensions within gay and lesbian cultural politics in Cape Town, and South Africa more broadly, are rife. That is to be sure. And campaigns to market "gay Cape Town" lend themselves to being read as promoting a space that has "little to offer anyone other than wealthy, white gay men" (Visser 2003, 170). But that does not mean that all "others" are excluded from this narrative. And it does not mean that it will succeed in producing the space of "gay Cape Town" as a homogenous gay white male space, a conclusion that Elder (2004) argues is foregone. In this chapter, I offer another narration of "gay Cape Town". I tell its story not through a reading of campaigns to market it, but through the words of its marketers themselves.

Between October 2002 and January 2003, I interviewed board members and staff members of the three gay and lesbian organizations – the Mother City Queer Projects (MCQP), the Gay and Lesbian Association of Cape Town Tourism Industry and Commerce (GALACTTIC), and the Triangle Project – that have been most active in promoting Cape Town as a pink tourism destination. The story that their responses give voice to is one that reveals serious cracks and fissures in the commodity that they are selling. It should cause us to reconsider the assumption that “marketeers’ fantasies” (Elder 2004, 583) can be easily mapped onto urban spaces, an assumption that I suggest underpins the contention that queer tourism spaces are exclusively gay white male spaces.

Optical exclusions

In their explorations of “gay Cape Town”, Elder and Visser express the same overriding concern. They both wish to make evident the exclusions that they claim this space conceals from view.

Visser highlights those subject-positions that we literally do not see in “gay Cape Town”. For instance, he states:

the marketing of gay male tourism to Cape Town, superimposed on the existing gay male dominance of DeWaterkant⁴, means that this area is promoted as a wealthy, white male leisure space. This problematizes the marketing of gay travel to ‘gay-friendly’ Cape Town in the sense that this space is not inclusive of lesbian or black visitors, both local and international” (2003, 185).

The language of superimposition thus utilized by Visser suggests that gay white male space is violently laid on top of “other” separate queer spaces that are struggling to emerge. Later, he makes this claim in more specific terms when he states that,

⁴ Cape Town’s gay village.

“underneath this ‘liberated space’ [ie. the gay white male consumptive space of Cape Town’s gay village] of gay expression lies a fare more complex and ‘unliberated’ socio-economic system” (2003, 185). Those whose experiences he feels are trapped within this ‘unliberated’ zone include “poorer white males/ lesbians as a whole/ black South Africans, as well as most of the ‘coloured’ community” (2003, 185).

Similarly, Elder is concerned about the ways in which “gay Cape Town’s” image obscures our view of its reality. He argues that in commodified queer spaces like that produced in Cape Town via its marketing as a pink tourist destination, “we see an apparent homogenization of gay space” that creates “a myth of ‘community,’ while also masking the life of gay and lesbian people and the material inequalities of globalization” (2004, 580). Further, he states that “Cape Town tourism and other publications have sought to refashion a particular time-space nexus in such a way that the particularities of that actual moment are lost and its material consequences at the very least hidden” (583). So in Elder’s terms, though a rhetorical strategy, the marketing of “gay Cape Town” has real material effects. As he states, the marketing literature that he considers “produce[s] intentionally gay, white, and masculine spaces” (584). And the role that critical approaches to such spaces must take is, in his view, to shed light on these injustices. He states:

A globalized tourism process has unleashed a node of leisure spaces, internationally, in cities as distinct as Sydney, Rio, London, Montreal, Hong Kong and Cape Town. The process of dedifferentiation of gay male space, however, is a scam. Real local differences are purposefully masked in this process and a feminist geographic analysis has gone part of the way in exposing this process (586).

Like Elder and Visser, in what follows I too will expose “gay Cape Town” as a scam. But rather than uncovering the ways in which queer “others” are set apart from this

global queer nodal point – as Elder and Visser do in their readings of the rhetoric of the marketing campaigns that promote “gay Cape Town” –, in the stories of this space that its marketers themselves related to me I find that these “others” are in fact integral to it. And the particular ways in which these subjects are already there presents a formidable challenge to the notion that what Elder and Visser characterize as gay white male marketers’ fantasies can be straightforwardly mapped onto Cape Town.

“Gay Cape Town”

Since the 1996 signing of South Africa’s post-apartheid constitution, many individuals within Cape Town’s gay and lesbian community have sought to reach new heights of queer economic citizenship while enjoying their newfound political gains. Gay and lesbian businesses did indeed exist in Cape Town before the signing of the constitution. But their proliferation and increased visibility in the post-apartheid era is marked and their cohesiveness under the moniker “gay Cape Town” is also a recent development. As Andre Vorster, founder of the Mother City Queer Projects – also dubbed the “undisputed queen of pink power in Cape Town” (*Cape Argus* 2000, 7) – states, “my aim is making Cape Town the queerest city in the world. I’m not claiming that we are there. That’s what’s nice about the word making” (personal communication). The production of this consumptive queer space has been, and continues to be, spearheaded by three Cape Town organizations. They are the Mother City Queer Projects (MCQP), the Gay and Lesbian Association of Cape Town Tourism Industry and Commerce (GALACTTIC) and the Triangle Project.

MCQP began in 1994 as an annual queer costume party. In 2002 it merged with Cape Town Pride and expanded its scope to become a ten day festival of gay and lesbian

culture with a dual mandate to make Cape Town the world's premier queer tourist destination and to celebrate the progressive values of guaranteed equality and non-discrimination in the constitution.⁵ GALACTTIC is a not-for-profit gay and lesbian business forum that was formed in 2000. Its aims include "promoting Cape Town's gay commercial and professional sectors, and the development of a stronger gay identity in the Mother City."⁶ And Triangle Project is the oldest gay and lesbian health services and advocacy organization in South Africa (formerly GASA 6010, then ASET). As such, it plays a central role in Cape Town's gay and lesbian community and, though it only indirectly markets "gay Cape Town," the organization has strong linkages with both GALACTTIC and MCQP.

What follows is a narration of "gay Cape Town" from the perspective of its promoters and producers. To get at the ways in which these individuals see their efforts as something other than simply the creation of a consumptive space for gay, white males, it focuses specifically on how they view the ways in which their product operates as both a commodity and an aspect of queer community. It should be noted that to protect the identity of informants, they are identified only by affiliation except where comments were made in public forums.

Legitimation and Laissez-Faire

"Gay festival set to boost city coffers." – *Cape Times*, 12/14/01

"Cape Town camps it up for lucrative 'pink rand'" – *Cape Argus*, 12/30/98

"Mother City Queer Project earned R50m" – *Cape Times*, 03/01/01

⁵ See <<http://www.mcqp.co.za>>. Note that in 2004 Cape Town Pride and MCQP dissolved their formal partnership and that a pride festival was held in February while the MCQP party continued in its annual December slot. The benefits of offering queer events in two different months during the peak tourism season is cited as the reason for the split and the organizations continue to work collaboratively.

⁶ Advertisement for GALACTTIC in the "Cape Town Gay Guide." p. 95.

These headlines represent a dominant popular portrayal of "gay Cape Town." And the story that "gay Cape Town's" promoters tell about it, about its role in both the gay and lesbian community and the city more broadly, must begin along similar lines. No informant hesitated to point out that the "gay Cape Town" initiative is above all a money-making enterprise. And while all expressed concern over the ways in which homophobia could undermine the prospects of success for this queer business venture, they expressed optimism that this obstacle could be overcome in the following ways:

You shouldn't bring morals into a business plan (GALACTTIC board member).

If there are some conservative forces, which in this province there will be, you know in positions of power, money talks in the end (GALACTTIC board member).

The fag hag phenomenon is what feeds the economy (MCQP board member).

The fact that there are economic spin-offs directly related to people coming to the [MCQP] festival cannot go ignored. The city can't turn a blind eye and say there's a gay community happening over there and look that way (MCQP board member).

As this last quote alludes to, these marketers are interested in turning community into personal capital accumulation. But, at the same time, they expressed a fervent hope that the success of "gay Cape Town" could benefit the gay and lesbian community. This benefit is first and foremost cast as stemming from the attainment of legitimacy for Cape Town queers that they felt a presumably strong pink rand could bring about. Though gay and lesbian rights are now constitutionally entrenched in South Africa, the gap between this symbolic equity and "the transfer of rights from paper to people," as one interviewee put it, is strongly felt. And as the gay and lesbian community's potential economic

contribution to the city is highlighted as one way of addressing this situation, so are the beneficial effects of bringing queers into the mainstream by professionalizing the community.

A very strong Galacttic, not as in a little gay organization, but a gay Chamber of Commerce in Cape Town, that says something (GALACTTIC board member).

We're not just a little moffie⁷ party once a year, we're a big organization (MCQP board member).

Particularly revealing is the following quote from a Triangle Project staff member regarding the organization's consolidation of its two offices into one much more "aesthetically pleasing" office:

We had many comments from clients who would come to our Salt River⁸ office...and commented that the space was tacky. Not our space specifically but being in a community house basically. So coming into the space it was dirty, paint peeling, not really a good impression, which ten years ago was fine, the feel of the struggle, etc. etc. but you know we've made progress.

Along with the emergence of the city's queers from the fringe have come particular views of the politics of "gay Cape Town." While one MCQP board member expressed the stark view that "business and politics don't mix. They're best left apart. The festival isn't fighting for anyone's rights. We're just trying to bring unity and

⁷ Coined in the "coloured" communities of the Western Cape, the term "moffie" has become the South African equivalent of 'queer' or 'faggot.' Originally a term of derision, this term has been reappropriated as a term of pride by gay men themselves.

⁸ A suburb of Cape Town.

fun,” the majority of interviewees acknowledged at least some political role for a professionalized, mainstreamed queerness. For example:

I think it [the MCQP festival] serves a political purpose as well, in that it actually, on a micro-level it makes the city more accessible to our own gay community. How many straight people go to the MCQP party? How many people are curious about what’s happening and what’s been done. And I think that’s very good for the culture of the city. Not just for the gay community but for the other minority groups, you know, it makes the city more tolerant (MCQP board member).

This link between visibility and tolerance is, however, tempered by the recognition that each of these organizations has limited reach in a gay and lesbian community severely divided, particularly along class and race lines. In other words, informants were extremely aware of and concerned with the fact that “gay Cape Town” is what Elder has described as a “segregated space of exclusion”.

Frequently, those to whom I spoke framed this difficulty as one of both geographical location and culture. Mainstream “gay Cape Town” has definite geographic parameters. It exists in town or near town, not in townships where the majority of Cape Town’s “black” and “coloured” population live.⁹ Everyone I interviewed recognized that the accessibility of gay and lesbian events is a major issue due to the legacy of apartheid city planning and to the fact that Cape Town lacks an

⁹ The Triangle Project closed its satellite office in the township of Guguletu in mid-2002 and moved all its staff into an office in Mowbray. While a staff member described this location as a compromise between being “in” and “out” of town, it is still much more accessible from “in” town. Also, the MCQP party relocated from the River Club in Observatory to the center of Cape Town in 1998 – first to the Artscape theatre and this year to the Castle of Good Hope as party creator Andre Vorster sees a location in the city as pivotal in making the party a civic event. Likewise, all the MCQP festival events took place in the city centre. And GALACTTIC, while it has members in tourist areas, such as the winelands, surrounding Cape Town has no member businesses in any townships.

affordable, safe public transport system. But while they felt that it was important to overcome this difficulty, as indicated by the following quotes, many informants placed the responsibility for doing so on the individual:

One has to get to the bottom of it because there are definite reasons, it's not just apathy, in a sense it is self-exclusion but there's a reason why they exclude themselves. It's just that maybe the dominant culture is so white and so eurocentric it's just maybe a very scary environment (GALACTTIC board member).

It's a bit of a double-edged sword because you want to provide the transport so that the people will get there but if the people don't want to get there they're not going to go. If you want to get there, if money is short or not, if you want to go somewhere you'll make a plan. So what we said this year is if the guys do get there we'll refund them their money. And there weren't too many of those people (MCQP board member).

Nonetheless, townships are not left off the map of "gay Cape Town" entirely. The need for inclusivity is strongly felt within all of these organizations and the following quotes illustrate strategies for addressing it:

We need to get somebody on the committee who's got more community chutzpah, that goes out and actually gets into the community and actually draws them to MCQP... within a lot of the black communities gay issues are kind of very suppressed and not really out in the open so I think it's also working in that respect. They need to be proud of what they are and we need to instill a certain amount of pride. As an organization we have to think of getting people on the ground that aren't being told what's happening, try and empower them as well (MCQP board member).

Our outreach includes mapping new areas. It is a strategy of going to a new area, mapping it, activating resources there or somehow sensitizing them to gay issues and then moving on to the next one (Triangle Project board member).

So, though these promoters of "gay Cape Town" are keenly aware of its exclusions, the essence of their political vision of how it might overcome them is a

problematic one. It is one that emphasizes the diffusion of tolerance through visibility and the overcoming of culture and the instilling of pride through mere contact with those who are proud. In short, “gay Cape Town”, in the eyes of those officially responsible for producing it at least, offers a politics of depoliticized empowerment. Such a discourse partakes strongly of liberal solipsism. As Wendy Brown states, it “draw[s] a circle around the individual”. For, “in the very same act with which they grant her sovereign selfhood, they turn back upon the individual all responsibility for her failures, her condition, her poverty, her madness – they privatize her situation and mystify the powers that construct, position and buffet her” (1995, 128).

This political project in fact neatly dovetails with the economic goals set out for “gay Cape Town”. This point is illustrated by Andre Vorster as follows:

A black lesbian in a wheelchair in Khayelitsha has no pink rand or cents. We as a queer community must address the issues of poverty in this country – as much as everybody should. At the moment all Cape Town’s gay and lesbian events are commercially driven. We need a free queer festival that can bring together all Queer Capetonians.¹⁰

The speech during which he made this statement was a speech to the Cape Town Press Club that, not surprisingly, was pitched to make a case for the allotment of municipal funding to the MCQP, an organization to which he is related not only as director and founder, but also as paid staff member. He later goes on to declare that “we all will benefit” from helping to make the Mother City the queerest in the world; including presumably the black lesbian in a wheelchair in Khayelitsha. As such, he sets up “gay Cape Town” as a mode of trickle down queerness that is purported to deal with exclusion in two ways.

¹⁰ Cape Town Press Club Speech, November 15, 2002.

First, it deals with the remaining exclusions of gays and lesbians as a group due to still-rampant homophobia in South African society. His argument hinges upon the frequently articulated claim that the economic benefits of this marketing initiative will trickle outside the gay and lesbian community and thereby bring societal acceptance for homosexuality. And second, “gay Cape Town” is positioned as benefiting the gay and lesbian community since queerness also trickles down intra-communally. In Vorster’s logic, the symbol of “gay Cape Town” carries with it the ability to live out the promise of South Africa’s constitution for all gays and lesbians.

As such, the image in Figure 3.1 of the pink rand “trickling down” from Sheryl Ozinsky, head of Cape Town tourism, to the leaders of the Muslim Judicial Council and His People’s Church (two organizations that spear-headed a campaign against Cape Town Tourism’s marketing of the city as a gay and lesbian tourist destination in 2001)

Chip **SNADDON**



Figure 3.1 Cartoon by Chip Snaddon. *Cape Argus*, December 2001.

might equally accurately be re-drawn to replace Sheikh Achmat Sedick and Erroll Naidoo with unnamed 'black' and 'coloured' gays and lesbians.

Ambiguous Geographies

This story does many things. It does address exclusion. But it does so by combining a utopian strain – that surfaces in the suggestion that queer economic citizenship might result in the extension of benefits of queer political citizenship for all, regardless of colour – with a strain of liberalism that simplifies and belittles racial and class differences within Cape Town's gay and lesbian community. A desire to alter the racial composition of the boards of local gay and lesbian organizations to be more inclusive was frequently expressed to me in interviews. And the need to do "outreach" so that gays and lesbians outside the city centre could participate in queer events was mentioned by every informant. At the same time, the onus to participate and mobilize their communities was placed on "black" and "coloured" queers and shuttle buses to MCQP festival events were not organized because committee members insisted that no one would use them and precious funds would thus be wasted. Alternatives like assisting with the sponsorship of events in the townships were often bandied about but never acted upon. As one GALACTTIC board member candidly told me:

We're just soaked in our history in terms of the problematics of white people, and in particular white men, coming and doing for people of colour, both men and women. It's absolutely problematic. So it's difficult to initiate things like that [business development workshops in the townships] because there's historical distrust...If we had the will we would make it happen though.

Not surprisingly, interviews conducted with "black" and "coloured" gay and lesbian activists and community workers revealed frustration with racial schisms within Cape Town's gay and lesbian community. As one informant stated, "they want to have

more fun, they hijacked it [pride] from us. We want to make it a more political thing because many black people don't enjoy their rights."¹¹

Thus, though my informants without fail expressed a rhetorical commitment to overcoming racial, class and gender exclusions in "gay Cape Town", they have not actualized it and nor are there signs that they will. Nonetheless, in this absence of a hidden progressive political agenda, I maintain that we should still not resort to the reading that Elder and Visser glean from the story that the marketing campaigns they consider tell. In other words, I maintain that we cannot accurately characterize "gay Cape Town" as simply a smooth space of gaywhitemale-ness from which any alternate queer articulations are absolutely excluded. For, if we delve a little further into my interviewees' accounts of the production of "gay Cape Town," they express much recognition that their story is just a little too neat and fissures are revealed that suggest that this commodity's hegemonic status in the queer landscape of the city is by no means assured. As such, the ability of its marketers to map the gay white male consumptive space that exists as fantastic space in their marketing campaigns onto material spaces of the city is limited.

This crack in the narrative upon which I think we must base an alternate reading of "gay Cape Town" comes into view if we follow the above quote from Vorster's speech a little bit further. It closes, "this is what foreign tourists want to come and share with us.

¹¹ It should be noted that racial and class divisions within the gay and lesbian community in Cape Town cannot easily be categorized as "white" versus "black" and "coloured." Many informants suggested that Abigale (a gay and lesbian organization begun by non-white Cape Town queers to displace the predominantly white organization GASA 6010) did not last due to racial tensions between "black" and "coloured" organizers and between those organizers living in the city centre and those living in the townships.

Local is lekker!”¹² That “gay Cape Town’s” success hinges on its ability to provide something unique is a constant theme.

As soon as it’s been done there is a reason not to do it. And that’s how you design everything. I mean it’s fab that it’s been done but you have to work hard to remain fresh. I mean to just have done pride, bring it in because they’ve done it in America and it works in Canada or whatever. It’s not actually necessary for here. It’s necessary to lead rather than to follow (MCQP board member).

I like the idea of MCQP [as opposed to Pride] because it...gives Cape Town a different flavor, a different brand (Triangle Project staff member).

To set trends and lead is articulated as not just a desire. It is a market need. Though it is generally “argue[d] that whereas commodification homogenizes values, culture values difference” (Jackson 1999, 99), in fact, Cape Town’s degree of competitiveness as a gay and lesbian tourist destination hinges on its ability to set itself apart. As one GALACTTIC board member stated in reference to the Sydney Mardi Gras, “Sydney is peaking. People are looking for fresh alternatives.” And “gay Cape Town’s” promoters tend to think that its leading edge will stem from being home-grown. So despite the insistence that Cape Town’s “downtrodden” gays and lesbians need “gay Cape Town,” it needs them equally as much – as brand ambassadors. As the marketers behind Brand South Africa assert, “if suitably inspired, its citizens – and not some fancy logo or slick piece of spin doctoring – will make South Africa fly” (International Marketing Council of South Africa 2002, 7). And, “building [a] brand is an ongoing process, the most critical part of which is building receptivity, bringing South Africans on board” (Luhabe 2002, 18). All my informants stressed that getting this community buy-in is key to their success. In one particular example, members of the MCQP organizing committee stated their

¹² “Lekker” is an Afrikaans word literally meaning “nice, pleasant.”

frustration that the turn-out for most of the 2002 MCQP festival activities that they had organized was low. And one member expressed this frustration by saying, "why should foreign tourists want to come and celebrate with us? They can experience the same white culture at home that we're giving them here."

So this globalized commodity does not simply exist in a space beyond the material realities of its place, an exceptional gay white male space. It is simultaneously – and crucially – local. But embracing this locality will not guarantee the success of "gay Cape Town". This becomes clear when we consider how this commercial and seemingly western-orientated space grapples with its African roots. On this question, my informants had the following to say:

Unfortunately Cape Town is not really an African city but we do have many of the African things that make us different such as the African culture which you can partake in by means of townships tours and things like that (GALACTTIC board member).

[Responding to the question "does Cape Town offer anything different than what Sydney offers to the gay and lesbian traveller?"] Yeah, it's Africa. You know. I mean it isn't Africa as in north of Cape Town but it's got an African feel to it. It's got different cultures, different art, different museums. Although globalization has obviously affected all of us. But it's got a different feel to it, it's got a more unique, kind of less global feel to it. Although it's becoming very global (MCQP board member).

This is an ambiguous African identity at best. But even in ambiguity it could present a problem. For the satisfaction of consumer wants is crucial to the success of all marketing initiatives. And according to some, what the gay and lesbian international traveler wants may not be Africa.

The average tourist tends to be a white gay male in our little market, all coming down from Atlanta and London and Germany. They bring a vast bit of rand, they might not bring the vast pounds but it turns into vast rands. And they have big parties. They're out at the clubs, they're

buying their drugs, they're into the boys and it's all beach party... It's not because it's Africa, it's because there are good boys and there are nice beaches and the drugs are cheap and the party's cheap and the booze is cheap (MCQP board member).

I don't know that the average gay wants to go to Africa for a party. Party, I think you want infrastructure, you want to get your rocks off 1000 times a day, you want glitz, you want drama, that's what you want. I'm not sure that they know that Cape Town, that Africa's got that (Triangle Project staff member).

How queer marketers might satisfy the need to give the queer consumer local queer culture in a post-apartheid South Africa seeking to re-define itself as African is an open question. But what is clear is that although parallels between "gay Cape Town" and western gay capitals like Sydney are very easily found, the African-ness of this queer space cannot be escaped and must therefore be negotiated. In the anxieties evident in the narratives of my informants, it is clear that the gay white male consumptive space that Elder and Visser find "gay Cape Town" to be is at the very least not a smooth one.

Elder and Visser are right. Campaigns to market this tourist site set it apart from its locale. In particular, as Elder argues, they seek to lull the tourist into an artificial "colonial" aesthetic, they remake the queer landscape as only a male space, and they revision the politics of the anti-apartheid struggle to produce a less threatening vision of anti-racist struggles that do not disrupt the consuming patterns of white masculine metropolitan privilege (2004). In short, they present a vision of "gay Cape Town" as somehow beyond the present day realities of South Africa as a postcolonial African nation. But, as J.M. Coetzee has stated, "in each particular in which Africa is identified to be non-European, it remains Europe, not Africa, that is named" (1988, 168). I wonder if the reverse is true; if, when Africa is identified to be un-African, its African identity is in

fact affirmed. That such an intermingling of Africa with the west might be a possibility is attested to in the following quote from a Triangle Project staff member.

We're on one end of Africa and we've made and are making real changes in terms of the constitution in this country but our stability relies on whether we are subsumed by the rest of Africa or if we manage to push our issues out into the rest of Africa.

This African/ not-African problematic must be negotiated by "gay Cape Town's" producers and promoters whether they admit it in their marketing strategies or not. A gay white male space may be easily envisioned but it will be more difficult to map onto the city. There simply may not be enough demand for it if a wider spectrum of the gay and lesbian community does not buy into it. And there may not be enough demand even if they do. As Andre Vorster is quoted above as stating, "my aim is making Cape Town the queerest city in the world. I'm not claiming that we are there. That's what's nice about the word making." In the views of its promoters, "gay Cape Town" has not yet gotten to where they want to take it. Nor are they sure that they will arrive.

Resistance and African homosexualities

To fully get at the significance of this alternate reading, it is necessary to talk about another way in which I could have approached my critique of Visser and Elder's claims. What I set out in what follows is a mode of engagement that I did not choose to pursue because it would ultimately have meant continued residence in the terms of their debate, it would have meant continued adherence to the notion that gay white male space exists separately from and as an instrumental force upon the spaces inhabited by those it seeks to exclude.

As set out in chapter 2, since the publication of Dennis Altman's (1997) "Global gaze/ Global gays," an inaugural work of queer globalization studies, a central theme of

this literature has been the critique of the firm modern/ traditional, western/ non-western divisions that Altman presumed. In particular, in the small sub-literature existing within global queer studies specifically dedicated to African homosexualities, it has been asserted that it is possible to borrow from western queer cultures and be both African and homosexual. The ways in which this assertion has been made not only in reaction to western queer hegemony but in the face of substantial political obstacles is worth setting out here.

Zimbabwean President, Robert Mugabe's highly-publicized banning of GALZ – or in his words, the “association of sodomists and sexual perverts” (*The Herald* 1995, 1) – from the Zimbabwe International Book Fair in 1995 was the first of what has become a torrent of expressions of homophobia by various African governments. Some representative samples of the rhetoric:

Namibian President, Sam Nujoma: The enemy is still trying to come back with sinister maneuvers and tricks called lesbians and homosexuality and globalisation. These are all madness... They colonised us and now they claim human rights when we condemn and reject them (*The Namibian* 2001).

Ugandan President, Yoweri Museveni: When I was in America, some time ago, I saw a rally of 300,000 homosexuals. If you have a rally of 20 homosexuals here, I would disperse it (*The Monitor*, 1998).

Mugabe: I have people who are married in my cabinet. Blair has homosexuals... We are saying they do not know biology because even dogs and pigs know biology. We can form clubs, but we will never have homosexual clubs. In fact we punish them (SAPA-AFP 2002).

These sorts of vitriolic invectives denouncing homosexuality as western, colonizing, and extra-nationalist – in short, as “un-African” – have (with the notable exception of the South African case) presented an insurmountable obstacle to attempts to attain human rights guarantees for sexual minorities in states across the continent. And, despite the not

infrequent absurdity¹³ of these attacks, they trade on a certain amount of societal and cultural cache (South Africa is no exception here). As a result, both activists and scholars of African sexualities have felt a pressing need to effectively counter them.

One popular retort to the “un-African” argument has been the historical/ anthropological recuperation of the diversity of “traditional” practices of African sexualities. In this vein, Stephen Murray and Will Roscoe’s (1998) edited collection *Boy-wives and female husbands* is fast becoming required reading. In it, Africa is divided into four regions and the contributors provide evidence of such practices as same-sex marriages, cross-dressing, gender role reversal, and premarital peer homosexuality throughout the continent from the pre-colonial period to the present. Thereby legitimating distinctly African homosexualities, the collection traces the provenance of Mugabe et al’s views to colonial prejudice. The editors state, “the colonialists did not introduce homosexuality to Africa but rather intolerance of it – and systems of surveillance and regulation for suppressing it” (Murray & Roscoe 1998, xvi). In line with the editors’ intentions, this matter of fact counter-argument has been duly picked up in activist circles. For instance, Shuaib Rahim, Amnesty International's Africa Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Network Co-ordinator, states, “with colonization, European morality, concepts and laws were unilaterally imposed on the African people...Most indigenous cultural practices were classified as depraved, uncivilized or from the devil” (2000, 14). This is a story of original roots disrupted and pristine “African” practices disavowed by colonial and now evidently neo-colonial regimes.

¹³ In one example, Uganda’s former Education Commissioner, Fagil Mandy, advised parents to closely monitor their children’s dealings with ‘penpals’ because “you know those penpals abroad teach our children lesbianism and homosexuality because most of them are older and they convince our children.” “Mandy Blames Penpals for Sexual Behaviour,” *New Vision*, Kampala, November 7, 2001.

But while the recovery of sexual diversity in Africa is an important project of anthropological revision, critics argue that if relied upon too heavily this line of argument can lead only to a stultifying political praxis. Neville Hoad states, “the category of tradition, far from being a stable placeholder, is subject to continual revision from the interested point of the present, and to take on the traditionalist argument on its own terms is in some way to have lost it before beginning it” (1999, 567). He suggests that concerns over the ways in which western contact has spoiled “African homosexualities” should be replaced by engagement with discourses of anticolonial nationalism. And Zackie Achmat, founding member of South Africa’s National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (now the Lesbian and Gay Equality Project) has “no desire to search for the origins of homosexuality in indigenous African societies” because any recourse to tradition relies on a structural-functionalist narrative that fixes cultural identity, normalizes sexual activity, and neutralizes potentially subversive sexual acts. Instead of the celebration of traditions cemented in time immemorial, he suggests that what we urgently need are “genealogies celebrating rupture and discontinuity” (1993, 108).

The intended usefulness of such critiques is clear. By denying temporal determination – that is, by highlighting the spuriousness of the assumption that diverse sexual practices would have harmoniously persisted if only they had been left unhindered by western contact – they bring us into a present with more political options than would the unlikely revival of a glorified past. In these terms, it is therefore possible for “traditional” expressions of homosexuality in Africa to be touched by modernity and the west and still remain distinctly African identities. Thus, where Elder and Visser argue that “gay Cape Town” is an initiative that attempts to homogenize gay space, we might

seek evidence of its failure in instances of resistance along these lines. We might leave the rhetorical realm that they explore and turn to an examination of everyday, on the ground queer spaces in Cape Town. For instance, we might look at other non-gaywhitemale-defined gay and lesbian cultures in the space of the city and its townships as evidence of “other gay Cape Towns”.

There is certainly much room for work on many aspects of gay and lesbian cultural politics in various South African contexts, including that of Cape Town. And I do not want to suggest that it should not be pursued (in fact, in chapter five, I argue that such pursuits must be undertaken if we are to understand the space of queer politics in the new South Africa). But it is necessary to caution against the placing of faith for a progressive queer politics solely in these alternative gay and lesbian spaces. As I sought to demonstrate in the presentation of interview excerpts above, the rhetorical realm is not as smooth a space as it might seem to be. In the remaining pages, I want to discuss the ways in which the fractures in the narrative of “gay Cape Town” are tied to more overtly material realities, realities that require the reconsideration of the seemingly global and western-oriented product of “gay Cape Town” as a consequential site for specifically South African queer struggles.

Re-site-ing African queerness, or, the modern queer in a neoliberal age

Elder and Visser attribute an easily detectable fixity and concreteness to the commodity “gay Cape Town”. But, as described by its promoters, its rhetorical geography is in fact rather ambiguous. That it is simultaneously African/ not African, local/ global lends it instability. It is not simply a space of “un-African-ness.” But it is not simply “African” either. Thus the critique of arguments relying on “tradition” to

invalidate the position that homosexuality is “un-African” also requires critique. For despite invoking a different temporality, the spatial presumptions of arguments that conjugate modernity and African homosexualities attempt to bracket western taint too effectively. They thereby problematically position African-ness as bounded. In Mbembe’s terms, both positions trap the African imagination “within a conception of identity as geography” (2002, 271).

Two examples of such a separation of a modern African queerness from the west are as follows. Hoad argues that the Zambian government’s claim that homosexuality is a Norwegian conspiracy is not as far-fetched as it may sound to “well-intentioned westerners.” Based on the facts that LEGATRA (Lesbian, Gays, Bisexual and Transgender Persons Association, now defunct) received support from the Norwegian Ambassador and was financed by “international pink money,” he judges the organization to be “an effect of transnational organizing rather than a grassroots movement” (1999: 572-3). In his appraisal of the state of gay rights in southern Africa, Marc Epprecht (2001) critiques GALZ similarly on the grounds that it is funded by western donors and was until recently “white-dominated.” Neither Hoad nor Epprecht offer in depth analyses of the organizations they critique. Rather, they offer association in place of explanation, denouncing LEGATRA and GALZ for their ties with “the west.” To be clear, I do not have firsthand knowledge of these organizations and am not claiming that these criticisms are definitely invalid. But evidence rather than assumption is required to assess the effects of gay and lesbian rights organizations’ involvement with western capital or supporters. Exploration rather than the detached deployment of categories is necessary to determine the relationship between queerness in Africa and the west.

The story further goes that with association comes the possibility of cooptation. In Epprecht's words again:

Official" homophobia is "empirically correct" when it states "that 'homosexuality' is new to Africa and threatening to African traditions of propriety... Out gays and lesbians using explicit, sometimes crude sexual language... deeply disturb Zimbabwean sensibilities (2001, 1099).

In another example, William Spurlin, in his discussion of "emerging queer identities" in southern Africa, summarily states that, "Western cultures have had the capital means to circulate queerness as a commodity and the economic power to appropriate emergent forms of queer cultural production outside of the Euroamerican axis" (2001: 200). He therefore calls on western queer studies to curtail its own imperialist and homogenizing impulses lest "local homosexualities" be subsumed by a globalized western queerness.

Respect for diverse expressions of same-sex identities and practices and the sensitisation of queer studies to its own potentially colonizing tendencies are undoubtedly important issues. On this point I do not disagree.¹⁴ But the tendency within this small literature on African gay rights struggles to not just "bracket western taint" but to imply that any trace of "western-ness" should be exorcised altogether in favour of distinctly "African" expressions of homosexuality is problematic. Such a move does not merely take the "un-African" argument seriously, it allows it to dictate the terms of scholarly response. Where homophobic governments argue that homosexuality is a western import tout court, activist and scholarly detractors respond that while some "western"

¹⁴ Nor do scholars concerned not just with African sexualities but with "queer globalizations" more broadly. See for instance: Altman, 2001a; Cruz-Malave, Arnaldo & Martin F. Manalansan (eds), 2002a; and, Hawley, 2001.

expressions of homosexuality are indeed alien to African cultures, there are authentic, indigenous "African" homosexualities; and that these require nurturing and preservation.

I acknowledge that there are tensions between "western" gay and lesbian identities and expressions of same-sex identities in Africa. And I do not suggest that African/ not African, local/ global leanings commingle without tension in "gay Cape Town." But these tensions are generative. That these identifiers are not easily prised apart analytically, even though "gay Cape Town's" marketers might wish they were, suggests that debates over African queer resilience in the face of globalization that presume the opposition of African and Western homosexualities are flawed. First, such a position denies the diversity of queer cultures in "the west" and purports that there is one monolithic western queerness. Second, it equally dubiously presumes a category of authentic and knowable "African homosexualities." Third, it suggests that this abstract western queerness inevitably travels through global capitalism and narrow human rights mechanisms voraciously subsuming African particularity. The model assumes a relationship between 'the global' and 'the local' that is unilateral, where 'the global' impacts 'the local.' And finally, it leaves us with no viable political options. As Hoad nicely summarizes, "one is caught in the impossible position of either defending nationalist invocations of homophobia...or celebrating local lesbian and gay human rights claims as successful mobilizations of imperial power." (1999, 574). Thus hemmed in, the search for an "African" queerness becomes primary as evidence of a resistant, local, authentic diversity can be our only hope against a seemingly teleological march towards global gay homogeneity.

Where we look for these “other” queer geographies has logically followed for many participating in the queer globalization debates. The search has been trained on expressions of gay and lesbian culture and politics that distance Africa from the west. While emphasis on the study of different expressions of queer politics and cultures is indeed important work, insofar as it seeks to counter a presumably problematic western queerness with presumably progressive “other” homosexualities, it runs the risk of romanticizing local heterogeneity and overstating its political efficacy.

As an alternative to this retreat to the sphere of putatively local and African homosexualities, I suggest that a commodified, male- and white-dominated “gay Cape Town” in fact tells us much about the workings of queer politics. For if we look closely at the political landscape of gay and lesbian organizing in South Africa, it is revealed that a clean break from the market is impossible.

The ways in which the official end of apartheid altered South Africa’s polity are well known. Where once the majority of its people were disenfranchised, all – regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. – are now officially valued citizens. Where once South Africa sought to prove itself exceptional, it now works toward the realization of an African Renaissance. And where once it was a recalcitrant global outcast, the ‘rainbow nation’ is now a respected member of the international community. In short, segregation and isolation have been replaced by incorporation and cooperation as the defining principles of the post-apartheid era. South Africa has been normalized and so have those citizens that were excluded in its former dispensation, including gays and lesbians.

This is the context within which the country’s gay and lesbian movement has emerged. During the apartheid era, sporadic organizing around specific gay and lesbian

issues was white-dominated and apolitical. But as apartheid neared its end, a gay and lesbian movement (of sorts – a qualifier that is clarified in chapters 4 and 5) that aligned itself with the anti-apartheid movement was born. It continues to strive towards a coalitional style of activism to this day (see chapter 5 for an in-depth analysis of such activist efforts). These attempts to deepen democratisation in South Africa have been much-heralded by activists and scholars alike who look hopefully to this movement as a potential building block for continental change (see: Croucher 2002; Epprecht 2001; Gevisser & Cameron 1995). Considering how this gay and lesbian activism has positioned itself in the complicated, changing landscape of South African political economy must however give us pause.

It is patently clear that the politics of inclusion in the “new” South Africa has not led instrumentally to equality and freedom for all. In fact, the combination of a liberal constitution with a neo-liberal economic policy programme yields much evidence of an “uneasy fusion of enfranchisement and exclusion” (Comaroff & Comaroff 2000, 299). So, while an important symbol, the material effects of political enfranchisement – including that of gays and lesbians – have been severely curtailed because concomitant economic enfranchisement is lacking.

There is no question that poverty is a major stumbling block for the growth and continued relevance of the South African gay and lesbian movement. As part of its coalitional approach, the main national gay and lesbian advocacy organization, the Equality Project, couples its efforts to change remaining discriminatory laws with lobbying in coalition with other civil society actors for the equitable redistribution of wealth. It does so not least because it recognizes that a certain amount of economic self-

sufficiency is often necessary to insulate individuals from family and societal opprobrium¹⁵ and is often a pre-requisite for coming out.¹⁶ As such, this organization implicitly recognizes what Wendy Brown points out as the folly of “that dimension of liberalism which presumes social and political forms to have relative autonomy from economic ones to be that which can be tinkered with independently of developments of the forces of capitalism” (1995, 12).

The class politics of the Equality Project and other advocacy organizations is complicated however. The South African gay and lesbian community is divided along class lines. All such communities everywhere of course are, but in South Africa these divisions are particularly dramatic. Just because “the poor cannot eat votes or live on a good constitution” (Ebrahim Harvey, quoted in Comaroffs 2000) does not mean that the constitution has no effect on public life. That it has in fact resulted in very significant material benefits for some is the subject of much critique. As Kogila Moodley and Heribert Adam note in relation to the rise of a conspicuously consuming black bourgeoisie, “the new nation is on its way to being successfully transformed at the top but left even more hopelessly impoverished at the bottom” (2000, 64). But the needs and wants of those at the top cannot be forsaken in the post-apartheid dispensation. For in the “new” South Africa, it is a short move from progressive politics to the cutting edge of the market:

¹⁵ Of which there is much in South Africa. A recent study of intolerance in South Africa found that at least two thirds of the South African public express “negative attitudes” toward homosexuals. See: Gibson, James L. & Amanda Gouws. *Overcoming intolerance in South Africa: Experiments in democratic persuasion*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

¹⁶ Based on a speech given by Evert Knoesen, Director of the Equality Project in Cape Town, December 16, 2002.

As mentioned previously, queer theorists have long recognized the inevitable imbrication of gay and lesbian rights struggles with economic citizenship under capitalism. The South African gay and lesbian movement is not immune to this configuration simply because their sudden enfranchisement while still a relatively young, small movement has dictated that it has gone about things in reverse order to way in which the American movement did (cf D'Emilio 1983). That it has achieved significant rights gains while homosexuality is still largely a social and cultural taboo has in fact created a sense of urgency to promote positive images of gays and lesbians – not least as productive contributing members to the national economy. That queer South Africa is anything but outside the market is clear. Many in this newly politically enfranchised group have been incorporated into the creation of a pink economy as well as the national polity; a move not unwelcome by a state desperate to foster an entrepreneurial spirit and attract foreign capital no matter the colour.

South Africa has rejoined the international community/ political economy in a time that Hardt and Negri have characterized as “Empire.” Though their general argument has been convincingly critiqued,¹⁷ they make the compelling point that global capital no longer creates division “but rather recognizes existing or potential differences, celebrates them, and manages them within a general economy of command” (2000, 201). Leaving aside the critical factor of how this economy of command is “managed”, the shift from erasure to recognition of difference is significant. In this configuration, “Brand South Africa” (see International Marketing Council of South Africa 2002), a government-funded international marketing initiative, attempts to use South Africa’s high-profile new

¹⁷ See for example, articles by Chari, Corbridge, Merrifield, Raman, and Welker in the forum on *Empire in Antipode*, 35(1), 2003, p. 178-201.

democracy to carve out a niche position in the global arena. The attainment of such a foothold is in turn seen as instrumental to solidifying these democratic gains. At the same time, queer activists and businesspersons alike advocate the invocation of constitutional gains for gays and lesbians in queer economic ventures like “gay Cape Town” to combat social opprobrium towards homosexuals in the “new” South Africa.¹⁸ It has been a successful strategy given its alignment with the broader strategy of patriotic capitalism. That South Africa can market itself as a queer capital helps define its niche. Thus as queers are incorporated into the “new” South Africa and it is in turn re-incorporated into the global polity, both attempt to create a niche for themselves within the global economy of difference.

So “gay Cape Town” is a useful vantage point from which to shift our thinking on queer’s commodification. We must move to get a sharp critical purchase on relations between capital and sexual identity. In his analysis of “gay Cape Town,” Glen Elder states that, “well-meaning urban promoters, by neo-liberally commodifying everything in their path, inadvertently betray celebrated and marketed constitutional protections of sexual orientation” (forthcoming). But just as commodities do not float free in abstract space, neither do rights. Rather, they take place as they claim it. And they are being claimed constantly in “gay Cape Town.” As Sheryl Ozinsky, head of Cape Town tourism, argues, “the foundations of our pink tourism industry in Cape Town lie in the South African constitution, the most advanced constitution in the world, with regard to entrenching human rights in society” (personal communication). Andre Vorster, in a speech to the Cape Town Press Club to bolster support for marketing Cape Town as a gay

¹⁸ South Africa’s status as first nation in the world to include non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in its constitution is cited without fail in the marketing of Cape Town as a gay and lesbian tourist destination.

and lesbian tourist destination, likewise declared that “at stake are the issues of basic human rights enshrined in the constitution.”

Human rights “are not *our* instruments as rational actors for we are their product-effects rather than their originators” (Cheah 1997, 260, emphasis in original). The constitutional gains that gay and lesbian South Africans enjoy have travelled in various ways. As a result of these travels, the niche market is now an important queer political space. And in this post-apartheid era, it is a political space of negotiation rather than imposition.

A queer commodity

A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. [However,] its analysis shows that it is in reality a very queer thing.

-Karl Marx

Puar states, “it is one thing to state that heterosexuality is assumed in space, and quite another to proclaim that space is heterosexual” (2002c, 936). I agree and further argue that it is one thing to presume that gaywhitemale-ness is assumed in space, and quite another to proclaim that space is gay white male. In their marketing materials, “Gay Cape Town’s” promoters give it a public image as a white, homomasculine queer landscape. As Elder notes, this manoeuvre is a “scam”. This is an important observation. And it is one with which its promoters struggle. While it is marketed with such seeming confidence, my informants’ responses indicate that there is much evidence of not only an awareness of the flaws in the image of “gay Cape Town”, but also of anxiety over it.

As I explore at length in chapter 2, queer studies is currently dealing with its own anxiety as it struggles to come to terms with the implications of the normalization of homosexuality that has attended various modes of gay and lesbian political and economic

enfranchisement. In Elder's work, this same anxiety is noticeable: He states, "while the conflation of time and space to create a desired effect is reflected in most leisure travel brochures about the city of Cape Town, it is the unquestioned notion of the colonial in the context of gay and lesbian literature that is troubling" (2004, 584). Having long been on the outside and positioned as inherently radical, it is hard to come to terms with the notion that the queering of space is not necessarily a progressive move, at least not overtly or only. Though our faith in the power of queering has been badly shaken, our theorizing will not benefit from the entrenchment of an assumption that queer space has been trumped by the neo-colonial tendencies and gender bias that is now evident within it. For such an assumption will convince us to believe in a divide between "African" homosexualities and "western" queerness. It will lead us to overlook the ways that the political terrain of queer cultural politics is played out in South Africa and elsewhere has changed. And it will preclude us from considering the ways in which the aspirational "gay Cape Town" that its promoters set out in their marketing materials is but one part of a complex set of processes involved in the continual production of this queer space, processes that require unravelling.

CHAPTER IV

Being normal in a queer globalized nation-state: Homosexuality and the re-constitution of post-apartheid South Africa

The nation disallows queerness.

-M. Jacqui Alexander

The age of globalization is the age of universal contagion.

-Hardt & Negri

How wonderfully ordinary to be gay [in South Africa], in 1996.

-Anthony Sher

The nation's association with heterosexism inspires neither shock nor dismay amongst queer theorists both within and beyond geography. For queerness, if its contours can be defined at all, seems to be irrevocably tied to exclusion, to a position outside the realm of normativity. And as Judith Butler and Michel Foucault ably instruct us, the abjected outside is by no means an absolute one since it is constitutive of that which seeks to oppose it. So faith can be placed in the power of "queering," of rendering strange and thereby revealing the constructedness of heteronormative – and for that matter racist, classist, sexist, etc. – logics and practices. As such, queerness haunts the borders of the nation-state, threatening to disrupt and radically redefine it.¹

But what happens to queer theory, indeed to queerness itself, when the nation supports rather than opposes homosexuality? This, I suggest, is becoming an increasingly consequential question. For, as I set out in chapter one, though sporadic and diffuse, there is an unmistakable trend towards greater recognition of human rights for sexual minorities worldwide. And even in some states that have not enfranchised gays and

¹ On queering the nation/ state, see: Bejel 2001; Berlant 1997; Duggan & Hunter 1995; Gandhi 2002; and, Patton 2002.

lesbians, official tolerance is spreading as political costs and moral panics are outweighed by the allure of the purported economic benefits of gay-friendliness. The significant qualification that for every nation that has come to accept homosexuals as political and/or economic citizens *many* more remain deeply homophobic must of course be made. But that there is now a divide between gay-friendly and -unfriendly nations is an important development. The constitutive outside is on the move.

Given the radical orientation of queer theory, that the inclusion of gays and lesbians into national polities and economies – structures we have long positioned ourselves as struggling against – has been greeted with skepticism is to be expected. Such wariness easily leads to the suggestion that what we are witnessing is the simple appropriation of alterity by the strong capitalist state, that a homosexuality in complicity undermines its potential to queer, and that we must now more than ever bolster our resolve to oppose not just the normal but the normalization of sexual difference. In what follows here I interrogate this new prevailing wisdom via an exploration of the inclusion of “sexual orientation” in post-apartheid South Africa’s constitutional non-discrimination clause and argue that through this process in which two deviant bodies – a pariah state and its homosexual citizens – were normalized there is still much evidence of queering. The concept of the already queer nation-state is therefore something that needs thinking through. Applying the insight that scale is multiply constituted, so does the notion of an already queer globalization.

The queer threat and the demise of the (heteronormative) nation-state

The national as a site of danger both for and of queerness has been oft-theorized. The danger for queers is neatly summed up by Judith Butler who states:

[L]esbians and gays are excluded from state-sanctioned notions of the family...; stopped at the border, deemed inadmissible to citizenship; selectively denied the status of freedom of speech and freedom of assembly; are denied the right (as members of the military) to speak his or her desire; or are deauthorized by law to make emergency medical decisions about one's dying lover, to receive the property of one's dead lover, to receive from the hospital the body of one's dead lover (1998, 41).

Thus denied these (and more) state-sanctioned privileges and protections, the experience of homosexuality around the globe has historically been one of risk. But from this position of risk the sexual deviant also places at risk its oppressor. "One cannot exclude someone from the Nation unless she is already there" (Hayes 2000, 15) and the homosexual within, though repressed, always lurks, threatening in its possibility. When this being surfaces, queering may ensue; first as revelation, then as radicalization.

The revelation: that the nation-state as a heteronormative institution is such not because it must be so or should be so but because it is a construct with a shameful past of inequity based on slander. Far from being naturally or originally heterosexual, the state has been in many places and times deeply involved in regulating and promoting heterosexuality. To queer the state therefore is to call attention to this reality and to demand a place at the table for sexual minorities. Or, as Lisa Duggan (1995) puts it, to adopt the role of "disestablishmentarians" of the state "religion of heteronormativity" (189). The radicalization: upon revelation of the constructed nature of the nation-state's heteronormative bias, the institution is also revealed to be constructed in more thoroughgoing terms and thereby open to re-definition. Herein lies the significant threat. As Lee Edelman argues, homosexuality is a disruption of the field of vision that can be "so radical a fracturing of the linguistic and epistemic order that it figures futurity imperiled, it figures history as apocalypse, by gesturing toward the precariousness of familial and

national survival" (1992, 277). Thus threatening the effective undoing of history, queering then, as the resistant, corrupting, contaminating, challenging force queer theorists have conceptualized it to be, forces the nation to speak in a new tongue.

In short, queerness "keeps the possibility of radical change alive at the margins" (Duggan 1992, 27). But when queerness moves from the margins, queer theory occupies less certain terrain. In response to the reality that homosexuals are being increasingly courted as a capitalist niche and experiencing the positive acknowledgement of their existence within certain nation-states, booming notes of caution ring out (see: Alexander 1998; Chasin 2000; Cover 1999; Joseph 2002; Nast 2002a). For instance, Arnaldo Cruz-Malave and Martin Manalansan read such acceptance as the "appropriation and deployment of queer subjectivities, cultures, and political agendas for legitimation of hegemonic institutions presently in discursive crisis" (2002b, 5) and advise that we guard against the "sinister" potential inherent to such moves. They go on to argue that in the face of such encroachments we must stay the "queer" course. In other words, the lure of acceptance must be forsaken and the search for new sites of resistance outside the mainstream undertaken in earnest.

But I want to offer another possible approach. I want to turn away from the language of appropriation to suggest that where queering does not announce itself we should not assume that it is not taking place. Butler states, "if subversion is possible, it will be a subversion from within the terms of the law, through the possibilities that emerge when the law turns against itself and spawns unexpected permutations of itself" (1999, 119). Queer theorists have in many contexts convincingly demonstrated the inimical relationship between national rhetoric and state policy and the homosexual (non)

citizen. Might the rather sudden acceptance of the dangerous gay and lesbian subject be evidence not of the unequivocal mitigation of this threat but of a desire to be threatened, a desire of sorts to be queer? Could therefore the fact that certain states are turning from repressing the queer threat to embracing it not possibly be an example of one of Butler's "unexpected permutations"? Might not the state's incorporation of homosexuality signal its parodic repetition rather than its straightforward consolidation? I turn now to a reading of the inclusion of gays and lesbians in South Africa's post-apartheid constitution, a case the consideration of which should nudge us in the direction of taking these questions seriously.

Sexual orientation and South Africa's Equality Clause

The process of building a new South African nation-state in the post-apartheid era has been a complex and ongoing one. Along the way certain key events nonetheless stand out as nodal points. The signing of the post-apartheid constitution on May 8, 1996 is one such moment. On this occasion, Cyril Ramaphosa, Chairperson of the Constitutional Assembly, was moved to remark, "it is indeed a historic day. It is the birthday of the South African rainbow nation. This is the day when South Africa is truly born" (South Africa 1996a, 416). Thabo Mbeki, then Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of National Unity, followed suit by dubbing the constitution the "final starting point for the new South Africa" (South Africa 1996a, 427). Among the many South Africans for whom the constitution marked a historic new beginning were its gays and lesbians because its ratification marked the first time in South Africa's history, and in fact the

world's, that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation was constitutionally prohibited.² The Equality Clause made this so. It states:

The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, *sexual orientation*, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, and birth (South Africa 1996b, p. 7; emphasis mine)

Various reasons why "sexual orientation" was included in this laundry list have been offered and many critiques over how its inclusion was achieved have been leveled. Regarding the why, consensus seems to fall on the following set of factors. First, the climate was simply right. To at long last put to rest the evils of apartheid, tolerance was the mantra of the day. Since the writing of the 1955 Freedom Charter, the ANC defined itself by an insistence on human rights for all. That it should indeed extend rights to all was a matter of principle not easily compromised. Second, in the face of black rule, old political alignments were badly shaken. Major political parties catering to largely non-black constituents concerned that their voices would be drowned out in the new dispensation were eager to ensure the principle of minority rights; a position that would have been compromised had they chosen to push for the rights of only certain minorities. Third, the gay and lesbian lobby had many well-placed, influential allies who were truly sympathetic to the cause. And finally, the campaign launched by the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (hereinafter NCGLE or "the Coalition) to lobby for inclusion was by all accounts a highly effective one.

² This is not to claim that homosexuals in South Africa experience no social opprobrium. Indeed there is much. For instance, a recent study (Gibson & Gouws 2003) of intolerance in South Africa found that at least two thirds of the South African public express "negative attitudes" toward homosexuals. By focusing on the state's official acceptance of gays and lesbians I do not intend to obscure this reality.

This last point brings me to the how and its critics. By its own description, the NCGLE made a decision early on that, "as long as the favourable political climate remains, the principle strategy of the Coalition must embrace persuasion rather than confrontation" (NCGLE, 1995b). It therefore embarked on a campaign best characterized as orchestrated, managed, and insider. Having made a conscious choice not to mobilize a grassroots movement, the Coalition expended its efforts cultivating an appearance of professionalism, civic-mindedness and respectability. And it did so in a deliberately understated and highly disciplined fashion. A group of lobbyists was carefully chosen to personally target as many constitutional insiders as possible in face-to-face meetings. Public events related to the workings of the Constitutional Assembly were attended principally to monitor their content rather than to specifically raise gay and lesbian issues. Though many within the Coalition's member organizations disagreed in principle with this approach, dissension and critique of the executive committee was kept almost entirely out of the public realm.³

Regarding its substantive claims, the Coalition made itself relevant to the dominant concerns guiding the opening of the post-apartheid window of opportunity by drawing the necessary connections between race and sexual orientation. But it did so in culturally conservative ways by developing an argument stating the immutability of sexual orientation and the harmlessness of gays and lesbians that played out effectively

³ One notable exception was an incident that occurred during February 1995 in which an individual affiliated with one of the Coalition's member organizations made a statement to the media in which the recruiting policy of the South African National Defense Force was denounced as homophobic. Swiftly, a memo went out to all member organizations from the executive committee strongly indicting this action. It stated, "SANDF recruitment policy is not a priority. It is also critical that we do not alienate powerful sectors at this stage in the lobbying process, and that we do not become distracted from the all important goal of preserving the present equality clause." Henceforth, member organizations were required to obtain clearance for any and all press releases from the executive committee and no further such miscommunications are on record.

within liberal legal discourse. In other words, while cognizant of the need to present an image of gender, class and (most importantly) racial diversity within the movement, its adherence to a narrowly construed notion of equality ensured that it could make these links only tenuously. The Coalition steered far clear from what it thought would be publicly contentious issues like marriage, adoption, and partnership benefits⁴ and “avoid[ed] tackling its opponents within the terms of Afrocentrism” (Stychin 1996, 473). Further, though it insisted on the multi-racial nature of the “gay and lesbian community” for whom it claimed to speak, the Coalition itself was rather unrepresentative of this diversity. It regularly invoked “the credentials of black anti-apartheid activists” but “drew upon the legal experience of white attorneys and activists” (Croucher 2002, 320).

That this strategy worked is attested to by the fact that the phrase “sexual orientation” does indeed appear in the Equality Clause, but its nature left the Coalition open to “counter-arguments framed in the language of anti-elitism, democracy and the unrepresentativeness of the homosexual community” (Stychin 1996, 475).

The way in which I have told this story here is the way in which it has dominantly been told (see Cock 2003; Croucher 2002; Hoad 1999; Louw 1998; and, Stychin 1996). And from this reading, there seems nothing remotely queer about it. It seems a tale of gay and lesbian identity politics going mainstream at a politically opportune time. It seems a tale in which a state granted the concession of rights to a minority group so that it might bolster, or at least not undermine, its own claims to legitimacy. In short, it seems a tale of strategic essentialism and appropriation. But I suggest that another story can be told if

⁴ While not on the agenda initially, dozens of laws pertaining to issues like spousal benefits, immigration, etc. have been ruled un-constitutional in the years since the constitution's enactment. And it should be noted that many of these rulings have been achieved due to court challenges launched by the NCGLE and its successor the Equality Project.

only we subtly shift the focus. While others have rightly pointed out that the constitutional protection of homosexuals in South Africa was enabled by the emergence of an auspicious political opportunity structure, my aim is to explore what this move was more fundamentally about, to consider what the enfranchisement of gays and lesbians had the potential to do not just *for*, but *to* the post-apartheid nation-state. Thus emerges a story not about a strong state capable of mitigating the threat that queerness posed by incorporating it for its own consolidation, but a state that in fact wanted to be threatened and willingly accepted the contamination of difference.

Performing a strange new South Africa

Since [South Africa's] past had to meet the present through settlement, not revolution, it needed an accompanying rhetoric about how to process the future: and that process was divined as the act of nation-building.

-Ingrid de Kok (1998, 57)

As a country we've had a search for transformation. We're all agreed that the past couldn't continue and part of making our Constitution meant that every holy cow was thrown out of the window. We could start again with a clean slate and ask what kind of society we would like to have.

-Kevan Botha (1995b, 11)

Kwame Appiah describes post-colonialism as a "space-clearing gesture" (1997, 432). Of course, this brief quote's last word is the operative one. To gesture is to move towards, not to arrive. Thus while the post-colonial can never achieve a wiped clean slate, because it nonetheless constantly strives toward that end, the nature of attempts to clear space and thereby call the "post" into being are consequential. Transposing Appiah's insight from post-colonialism to its not-so-distant cousin post-apartheid gives us a productive view of the framing of the constitution. As a key moment in attempts to consolidate a new era, this process was centrally about the negotiation of the legacy of

the past (and of tensions emerging out of the transition from that past) such that the right conditions for the creation of a future, more just South Africa could be set. Debates over the inclusion of “sexual orientation” in the Equality Clause, as part of this broader process, were inevitably part of these negotiations. What follows explores these debates and looks at the ways in which many of the most serious threats to the constitutional project were undermined (at least narratively) by embracing homosexuality.

Perhaps surprisingly, all of the main political parties (ie. the African National Congress, the Democratic Party, the National Party⁵ and the Freedom Front) actively

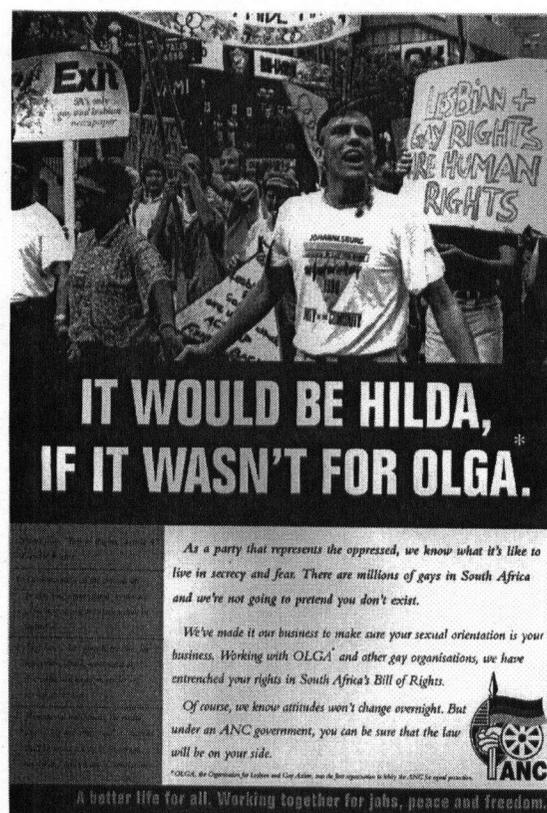


Figure 4.1 ANC campaign poster, 1994

⁵ A party which sent hundreds of African, coloured and white men to prison for sodomy during the apartheid era.

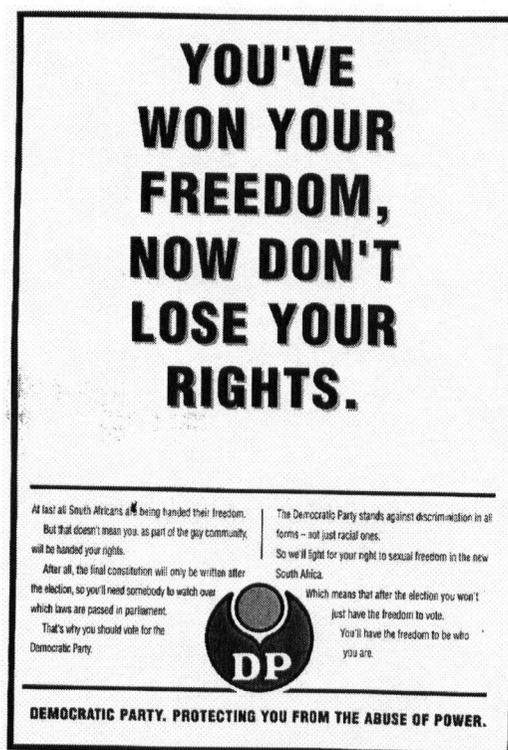


Figure 4.2 Democratic Party campaign poster, 1994

supported the move to constitutionally enfranchise gays and lesbians.⁶ In fact, as illustrated in Figures 4.1 and 4.2, the ANC and DP actively courted gay and lesbian voters in the run-up to the 1994 election. A rather vociferous opposition surfaced nonetheless through the efforts of a marginal party called the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP). Founded in 1993, in part by former anti-apartheid activists, the ACDP sought to articulate moral Christian views it felt were not adequately addressed within the post-apartheid political arena. Its membership consisted of evangelical Christians who had become disenchanted with the ANC's response to social issues such as abortion, crime, and in particular, homosexuality. Despite winning only

⁶ But party discipline undoubtedly suppressed intra-party opposition. Regarding her own party, the ANC, Cheryl Carolus conceded that its official position was not supported among its rank and file. She states: "One must accept that the ANC is made up of very ordinary South Africans who bring with them many of the misinformed views, perspectives and prejudices that exist in society as a whole." See "Cheryl Carolus speaks" *Equality*, 2, 1995c. p. 4.

two seats in parliament in the 1994 election, the party's resistance to dominant political discourses gave it a public visibility far exceeding its electoral base. The NCGLE tacitly acknowledged that had the issue been put to a referendum, most South Africans would likely have supported omission of "sexual orientation" from the clause. Therefore, despite the unpopularity of its wider platform, the ACDP touched a nerve on this particular issue. While the NCGLE emphasized behind the scenes lobbying, the ACDP put the question of sexual orientation up for public debate, and it became a heated one at that.

The following samples of the homophobic rhetoric produced by the party and its supporters encapsulate the flavour of this opposition.

As an African, I wouldn't like to see European liberals imposing their lifestyles on the African masses.

-Pastor Kenneth Meshoe, leader of the ACDP (Constitutional Assembly, 1995)

Nation-building cannot be possible while we try to legally destroy family values and the moral fibre of our society with clauses in the Constitution that promote a lifestyle that is an embarrassment even to our ancestors.

-Pastor Kenneth Meshoe (South Africa, 1995)

I hope the leaders will seriously consider all aspects in drafting the new constitution and remind themselves that we are not here to please the rest of the world.

-letter written to Constitutional Assembly in support of the ACDP's position on homosexuality

I am sure you will agree that we should strive to uphold the good and moral qualities which South Africa stands for.

-letter written to the Constitutional Assembly in support of the ACDP's position on homosexuality

In this discourse, the familiar trope of the threatening homosexual is forcefully invoked by the insistence that the normalization of sexual deviance would spell the end of

civilization as the ACDP would have liked to shape it; that is, with its mix of evangelical Christian and narrowly defined African nationalist values. And as the ACDP's version of the new South Africa was thus threatened, so it in turn threatened the future South Africa that the ANC and other dominant parties hoped would be called into being at least in part through the constitutional process. Though related, three individual strands of the ACDP's logic stand out as posing specific threats to the vision of South Africa's reconstruction as a tolerant, just, globally re-connected nation that largely guided the constitutional deliberations. First, reference to biblical values and South African morality gel rather too easily with the principles that underlay the apartheid past and thus hints at the perpetuation of elements of this inglorious old regime. Second, calls to reject the opinion of "the rest of the world" and stay a distinctly South African course threaten to perpetuate the international isolation South Africa experienced throughout much of the apartheid era in the form of both internally imposed exceptionalism and externally imposed sanction and opprobrium. And third, references to "ancestral" values defined as distinct from "European liberalism" hint of a despotic future in the worst postcolonial African tradition. In the ACDP's opposition to a gay-friendly South Africa therefore congealed many elements of the most pressing concerns of the day.

In response, arguments for the inclusion of "sexual orientation" in the Equality Clause made by the NCGLE and its supporters tackled these challenges head on and the cause of human rights for homosexuals became a specific vehicle through which to counter various threats to the construction of a "new" South Africa. The following explores the nature of the responses to each of the three threats outlined above in turn.

Ending apartheid with "Equality for all"

The linkage between the concession of rights to gays and lesbians and the relegation of apartheid to the past was made early and often in the Coalition's lobbying effort. In fact, its first official submission to the Constitutional Assembly deals predominantly with this issue. It argues:

The Constitution enshrines the right to express differing views and to live varying lifestyles. It cannot enforce only the views of certain religions. This would endanger the fertile pluralism of our society, the rich diversity of our lives and experiences, and endanger our commitment to transcending our discriminatory past (NCGLE, 1995a).

Beyond the need for a secular state, this submission also specifically identifies bigotry, hatred and exclusion as apartheid values that the sanctioning of discrimination against gays and lesbians in a new constitution would be a regression to. Explicitly setting itself apart from the evils of the past, the Coalition iterates and re-iterates its slogan, "Equality for all."

Supporters of the Coalition's cause duly picked up on this line of argument. The ANC's Carl Niehaus for instance stated:

To discard any segment [of the population]— be it the gay and lesbian or the Jewish segment, for example — would serve only to create further problems and entrench a different kind of 'apart-hate'. We are just emerging from a period where discrimination was the pre-requisite for existence in South Africa, and we cannot slide the country back into the vicious circle (Rose 1994, 20).

And one letter written by a member of the general public in support of the NCGLE's position stating that, "in South Africa we must never forget that the Apartheid regime held the bible in its one hand and the whip of oppression in its other hand" echoes a thread found in countless others.

Queer Nation, Global Nation

Along with biblical moralism, the ACDP alludes positively to another apartheid characteristic, its parochialism. In response to implications that staying a truly "South African" course and resisting the "trends of the world around us" (as stated in one letter in support of the ACDP's position), the pro-inclusion discourse stresses open-ness and the re-assertion of South Africa's place in the international community of nations. The NCGLE's second (and final) official submission to the Constitutional Assembly pre-occupied itself entirely with setting the question of gay and lesbian rights within an international framework. It carefully detailed precedent setting cases in both international and domestic law that demonstrated a trend towards greater protection for the rights of sexual minorities around the globe. Supporters of the NCGLE consolidated this line of argument. One letter to the Constitutional Assembly states:

You are engaged in the historic process of casting aside racial, language, gender, religious and other forms of discrimination deemed unacceptable by the standards of the modern world, please also cast aside discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (emphasis mine).

And a letter to the editor of *The Star*, a Johannesburg daily, in response to an anti-NCGLE commentary describing AIDS as a gay plague comments:

Just when we thought it was safe to venture into the waters of humanity, wearing our designer-constitution bathing costumes, a bigot's fin surfaces (Montgomery 1995, 13).

But why merely keep up with the "modern world" when you can lead it? This is the question that the NCGLE put firmly on the constitutional framers' minds. Noting that despite a growing global gay and lesbian rights culture no other domestic polity had yet enshrined gay and lesbian rights constitutionally, it positioned the opportunity to do so in South Africa as an opportunity to re-enter the international arena at its forefront. The

phrase “the only country in the world” is peppered liberally throughout its press releases and official documentation. And it caught on. In one illustration of the way in which it did so – and a particularly interesting one given the scrutiny that US President Bill Clinton happened to be simultaneously under for his failure to meet his promise to address homophobia in US military policies – an ANC official was quoted as making the following comment in relation to gays and lesbians in the South African National Defense Force:

Mrs. [Lindiwe] Sisulu said other countries had seen years of debate and controversy on the issue, and S[outh] A[frica] had to take a lead in placing such a fundamental right beyond question, even in the SANDF (*The Citizen*, 1995).

So a gay-friendly South Africa could emerge from international isolation as not just another modern nation but as an exemplary one.

In its response to these first two threats, the NCGLE rejects the ACDP’s call to “Save South Africa”⁷ and offers in its place a new, open, and more just nation. That this represents a queering of the South African nation-state is encapsulated in journalist Mark Gevisser’s appraisal of the 1994 Johannesburg Pride Parade. After quoting a Christian fundamentalist who states, “a lot of people consider us fanatics and freaks, but we hope to make these people realize it is a wicked thing,” Gevisser comments:

here was a Christian fundamentalist, claiming to represent the moral majority, admitting that it is he and his troupe of naysayers who are generally considered to be “fanatics and freaks”; acknowledging, in effect, that it is he – and not the gay marchers – who is marginal and out of step with the new South Africa.

He then goes on to quote Sir Ian McKellan, British actor and vocal advocate for the inclusion of sexual orientation in the South African Constitution who states, “to be South

⁷ ACDP slogan.

African now, you have to be open and you have to be free. If you're not you're just not part of the new society" (1994, 13). Thus apartheid was rendered strange.

Given the prevailing tenor of the day, that these particular lines of argument launched in response to the ACDP were effective is hardly surprising. Since de Klerk's announcement of the unbanning of the ANC in 1990, it had been officially recognized that a range of domestic and international factors had made apartheid a system that was simply no longer tenable. International reaction to domestic injustices brought on increasingly rigorous political, economic, and social ostracization of South Africa and that isolation in turn exacerbated domestic affairs; most dramatically through the creation of a fiscal crisis of epic proportion (see Habib, Pillay and Desai 1998; Lieberfeld 2000; and O'Meara 1996). As Martin Hall has so aptly stated, the 1990s in South Africa were "a time of transformation from pariah to paradigm" (2001, 460). But the achievement of this transition required not only the abandonment of exclusionary logics such that international isolation on a global scale could be countered, it also required re-integration regionally and continentally. In other words, the new nation had to come to terms with what it would mean to be "African"; a topic that was neither as well-rehearsed nor as confidently approached within public discourse as was the value of tolerance and openness. The ways in which the NCGLE ended up grappling with this question as its campaign unfolded represent another, and perhaps the most significant, queering of the new South Africa.

Consolidating South Africa's African Renaissance

With the formal abandonment of apartheid, inter- and intra-continental as well as domestic expectations about the way in which South Africa's role in Africa would be

restructured were high. During apartheid, South Africa saw itself and projected an image of itself as more closely tied to Europe than Africa. Given this long history of self-designed exceptionalism, the question of how South Africa would refashion itself as African was therefore a key question during the transition from apartheid. A long-time destabilizing force, particularly within the Frontline States of southern Africa, the ANC spoke of a new South Africa that would cooperate economically and politically with its neighbours for mutual benefit. Such rhetoric was welcome in the rest of Africa since, although battered, South Africa still occupied a hegemonic position within it. Beyond the continent, the following statement, made by US Department of Commerce Former Under Secretary for International Trade, Jeffrey Garten, encapsulates a certain strand of international sentiment: "South Africa is more than an inspiring story. It is a nation that represents the best last hope for a continent" (quoted in Ahwireng-Obeng and McGowan 1998, 5). Beyond governmental rhetoric, the necessity to grapple with South Africa's "African-ness" was widely recognized by its own citizens. Various social and political reasons were undoubtedly compelling enough for many. For others, that the continent was then, as it is now, South Africa's biggest trading partner probably lent the issue a deeper practical relevance.

However, the recognition of necessity by no means vanquished anxiety over this issue. "Black rule" (even in the coalitional form it took in its first iteration) was an unknown for South Africa. And fear of that unknown was palpable. Tellingly, the slogan adopted by the Democratic Party in the 1994 election campaign, "saving you from the abuse of power," played on this fear amongst its newly minoritized constituents. But this anxiety was felt well beyond the white community given that South Africa had witnessed

the slide of numerous independence movements on the continent into corrupt, and not infrequently despotic, postcolonial disappointments.

Debates over South Africa's future as "African" were not ones that the NCGLE originally chose to tackle. Nonetheless, they became a flashpoint in public discourse around the inclusion of "sexual orientation" in the constitution when in August 1995 Robert Mugabe, head of state of neighbouring Zimbabwe, very vehemently made his views on the relationship between Africa and homosexuality known. Upon learning that the Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe were scheduled to occupy a booth at the annual Zimbabwe International Book Fair, Mugabe stated:

I find it outrageous and repugnant to my human conscience that such immoral and repulsive organizations like those of homosexuals, who offend both the agents of the law of nature and the morals and religious beliefs espoused by our society, should have any advocates in our midst or even elsewhere in the world (*The Star*, 1995a).

This was but the first of many vitriolic attacks in which the designation of homosexuality as "un-African" and a sign of western decay surfaced as dominant themes. As this rhetoric resonated strongly with the ACDP's narrow version of African nationalism, the NCGLE could not but engage with it. Indeed, the Mugabe affair unexpectedly became a key issue around which public support for the NCGLE was galvanized. As Graeme Reid, one of the members of the NCGLE's executive committee at the time, stated:

It was a moment in which there was a wave of public support for the coalition that we hadn't experienced before. Letters to the newspaper, cartoons, editorials across the newspaper spectrum were the first time uniformly and vociferously in support of the national coalition (interview, July 2003).

The following samples are representative of the overwhelming denunciation of Mugabe in South Africa's popular press:

Mugabe's homophobia will certainly not win him any friends in the brotherhood of nations, where his human rights track record has always been suspect (*City Press*, 1995).

Under Western eyes, [Mugabe] has done worse than ruin his human rights image: he risks making himself an international figure of fun (*Business Day*, 1995).

Such critiques also entered the Constitutional Assembly's official proceedings. In an October 1995 debate on fundamental rights – one of only a few debates held by the Constitutional Assembly in which homosexuality figured prominently – Democratic Party MP Dene Smuts responded to the ACDP's stance on homosexuality with the assertion that a repeat of Mugabe's homophobic campaign could not be allowed in South Africa.

In addition to highlighting his poor human rights record and declining reputation around the (at least western) world, Mugabe was criticized as a specifically African leader. As one commentator writes, "it would appear that Africa has found itself a human rights embarrassment – Robert Mugabe!" (*The Star*, 1995b). A deeply troubling observation given Mugabe's impeccable credentials as a leader of Zimbabwe's hard-fought liberation struggle, this linkage between homophobia and postcolonial misrule is made again and again. One more example, and a particularly striking one, of this critique is the cartoon given as Figure 4.3 below. Emaciated Zimbabweans pressing empty food bowls up to his window watch while Mugabe, dressed as Marie-Antoinette and eating cake, states, "The peasants are hungry? Let them bash gays." A small figure in the corner wearing a Republic of South Africa cap passes judgment on the scene with a placard that reads, "What a drag."



Figure 4.3 Cartoon by Dov Fedler, *The Star* (Johannesburg), 29 August 1995.

Beyond the straightforward denunciation of and embarrassment over Mugabe's example of African governance, many commentators begin to articulate an alternative meaning of "African-ness" in their rhetorical response. Starting from the position that if African-ness means despotism and corruption, then to be queer is indeed to be un-African, the NCGLE and others end up asserting a different kind of African South Africa than the one many of its citizens feel they have reason to fear. The NCGLE, while refusing to engage in an explicit and sustained way with Mugabe's assertion that gayness is un-African, instead attacks his own African credentials. They declare, for example, their intention to "expose [Mugabe's] cynical vilification of gays and lesbians in order to obscure his own failure to provide Zimbabweans with health care, housing, education, and food" (Botha 1995a, 15). And in reference to his statement that "homosexuality is for

whites only and is an anathema to African culture,” they make the pointed suggestion that “we have to ask Mugabe whether the murder of thousands of Ndebele people was an “anathema to African culture”?” (NCGLE pamphlet). Echoing this refrain, a non-NCGLE interlocutor makes the provocation that “perhaps we should drive Mugabe up north into the carnage of Rwanda and the political intolerance of Nigeria. He might well find a comfortable and heart warming place he could call home” (*The Star* 1995b).

A homophobic African-ness associated with violence, intolerance and the infliction of daily human suffering thereby derided, the acceptance of gays and lesbians promises redefinition. As Edwin Cameron writes:

The controversy about the place of homosexuality in our society, and whether the law should protect gays and lesbians against unfair discrimination, raises real and important questions for us as Africans, and particularly as South Africans... To whom, and to which groups, does our concept of African humanity extend?... As the majority judges in both the recent Zimbabwean and Namibian decisions pointed out, when they ruled in favour of keeping sodomy a crime and in disregarding a long-term same-sex relationship in immigration preferences, there is a difference between South Africa and the other two countries (2001, 43).

Within this difference is held the promise of a new but still African politics, the promise that the postcolonial state in Africa can be something other than disappointing. In fact, Peter Vale saw the South African gay and lesbian community’s response to Mugabe as already evidence of this something else. He stated, “for the first time in the region’s history, an interest group in another country has put pressure on the leader of a majority-ruled government. This is an entirely new development, and it holds enormous potential for the growth of civil society in southern Africa” (1995). In the same vein, Figure 4.4 depicts the potential regional ramifications of South Africa’s differently realized African

politics. In this image, onlookers are hopeful that Mandela, as leader of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) band, will set this regional organization back on track. Meanwhile, the male figure mockingly offering Mugabe a kiss from offstage overtly links the SADC's signs of derailment while he was at its helm to the same limitation from which his homophobia stems.



Figure 4.4 Cartoon by Jonathan Shapiro. *The Sowetan* (Johannesburg), 30 August 1995.

Queer Theory and the New Queer Nation

*We, the people of South Africa,
 Recognize the injustices of our past;
 Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land;
 Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and
 Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.
 We therefore, through our freely elected representatives, adopt this Constitution as the
 supreme law of the Republic so as to –
 Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social
 justice and fundamental right;
 Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on
 the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law;*

Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; and Build a united and democratic SA able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.

-Preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996

Mahmood Mamdani opines that, “the South African transition...is about creating something that has never existed before” (2000, 182). And as part of that transition, so was the framing of the constitution. It was about creating a consultative and just political framework where there was once conquest and dispossession, about fostering international relations characterized by mutual cooperation and benefit where isolation and suspicion previously prevailed, and about calling into being a new South Africa for South Africans and writing a different definition of the African postcolonial state where once African-ness was cast as alien. But as are all creative processes, this one was also tied heavily to destruction. The achievement of the post-apartheid moment obviously did not vanquish all forces hostile to the new South Africa’s stated goals and this was a reality that the constitutional process could not but consider. As such, although the NCGLE actively played down the threat that including sexual orientation in the Equality Clause posed to social norms and institutions, the embrace of homosexuality by the South African nation-state was not about mitigating the threat of queerness. It was rather about embracing that threat so that it might in turn mitigate others. A queered South Africa rendered strange the apartheid past, the desire to remain isolated, and expectations that the reconstructed nation could follow in a despotic postcolonial African tradition. Thus the queer threat was not undermined. Rather, it was embraced so that it could in turn undermine other forces threatening the success of the constitutional process.

In this narrative, I have gone back to one of the new South Africa's key founding moments and located within it the founding of a queer state. But, if scale is always multiply constituted, there must be more at stake here. Openness to the notion that the national – as a scalar phenomenon – is mutually constituted by other scales allows a re-reading of this narrative for what it tells us about queerness and globalization.

Globalization goes queer

Many globalization theorists convincingly assert that we should not mistake the emergence of a consciousness of a global ecumene for the emergence of the phenomenon itself. And as globalization is not new, nor have same-sex activities throughout history been inflected solely by the national. For instance, Elizabeth Povinelli and George Chauncey (1999) state:

Analyzing lesbian and gay social formations and consciousness in the industrial cities of North and South America during the last century suggests the long history of transnational and diasporic sexualities and their impact on national sexualities (440).

Migration, colonization, travel, anthropological enquiry and countless other activities routed through the global scale have long-connected sexual cultures and politics in diverse locales. But the 1990s seemed to usher in something qualitatively different about these connections as the identity categories “gay” and “lesbian” gained ideological purchase in places far afield from the western bases in which they first sprang. The emergence of familiar looking gay and lesbian social movements, urban ghettos, and cybercultures everywhere has induced queer studies to go beyond the national frame in recent years.

Thus while as recently as the mid-1990s a trip to my neighbourhood gay and lesbian bookstore quickly revealed the distinctly western geographical bias of queer

scholarship across the disciplines, now a browse through the aisles of that same bookshop is a testament to the proliferation of work on the study of sexuality around the globe. In its sizeable "world" section, shelves groan with such titles as: *Gay Cuban Nation* (Bejel, 2000); *Queering India: Same-sex love and eroticism in India* (Vanita, 2002); *Queer Nations: Marginal sexualities in the Maghreb* (Hayes, 2000); *Boy-wives and female husbands: Studies in African homosexualities* (Murray and Roscoe, 1998); *Male homosexuality in modern Japan: cultural myths and social realities* (McLelland, 2000); *Tongzhi: Politics of same-sex eroticism in Chinese societies* (Chou, 2000); and, *Tropics of desire: Interventions from Queer Latino America* (Quiroga, 2000). Far from merely charting the existence of queer subcultures and their relationships to various nationalisms, these and other works within this small, nascent literature are focused on the project of theorizing just what the relationship between queerness and globalization is. Not surprisingly, the themes of space and spatiality figure prominently here.

Along these lines, many of the concerns that have and continue to persistently guide this work were presaged by Dennis Altman (1997) in his "Global gaze/ global gays," one of the first influential essays to mark queer studies' "global turn." As discussed in chapter two, his work is preoccupied with the negotiation of local/ global, western/ non-western relationships within gay and lesbian communities in the "non-west." He wonders how to balance "universalizing rhetoric and styles with the continuing existence of social and cultural traditions" (420) and cautions against the deployment of "developmental" narratives that portray same-sex cultures in the "third world" as progressing inexorably towards a "western-style" endpoint. In short, he reads global queerness as extending out from the west as a threatening, potentially colonizing force

that looms over diverse, local homosexual cultures around the globe. Though Altman's work has by no means been uncritically received, his insistence upon study beyond teleology and the danger of focusing on a monolithic global gay culture are by now common tenets of the body of work concerned with global queerness. The uneven pitting of a global, western queer culture against diverse, local, non-western expressions of same-sex identity is marked as problematic and the desire to foster other global-local relationships through decolonized queer scholarship well-entrenched. Globalization, as a force impinging upon local queer cultures from without, has been truly marked as dangerous.

Queer globalization has thus been understood as a phenomenon within which traditional/ modern, global/ local, western/ non-western binaries are negotiated in the determination of queer subjectivities. But if we read this phrase, "queer globalization," not as one collective noun but as a transitive verb followed by a noun, another meaning emerges. Globalization itself might be "queered." Though by no means a fully flushed out proposition, various commentators have made the provocative suggestion that such a queering might be a desirable political project to embark upon. In this vein, the argument made by J.K. Gibson-Gibson (1996) in *The End of Capitalism (as we knew it)* is well known to geographers. As part of her effort to re-narrate capitalism, she offers a chapter titled "Querying globalization" that argues, felicitously, for a queering of global capitalism. Purporting that mainstream economic theorizing is "homophobic" because it acknowledges only the penetrative nature of international financial markets while eliding the possibility that anything "other" comes into or out of this opening" (137), she asks how we might "get globalization to lose its erection – its ability to instill fear and thereby

garner cooperation” (126-7). In answer to this question, she draws attention to the ways in which “non-capitalism” already invades “capitalism” and can be made to undermine it more thoroughly if theoretically and practically nurtured.

Whereas Gibson-Graham invokes the notion of queering globalization as a rhetorical strategy for re-working grand meta-narratives driving global capitalism, in another example, Arnaldo Cruz-Malave and Martin Manalansan (2002b) ground it more firmly in queer cultures and politics. In their introduction to *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the afterlife of colonialism*, a volume that aims to develop “a situated knowledge of the ways global capital has routed queer cultures and lives,” they highlight the theme running through many of the contributions of queerness as representing an alternative itinerary that might “yield counterhegemonic routes that can redirect global capital’s mass dispersions toward global cross-cultural engagements and coalitions that are more respectful of queer cultures and lives” (4). For instance: Chela Sandoval calls for a “dissident globalization that eroticizes differently” (2002: 21); Bill Maurer offers a queer reading of Keynesian economic designs that highlights their probabilistic nature and leaves open the possibility of recuperating an alternative keynesianism (2002); and Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes asserts the importance of maintaining alternative queer positions in the face of the “unrestrained expansion of US global capitalism” (2002: 164).

Therefore, as in theorizing on the relationship between queerness and nationalism, work on queerness and globalization also revolves around danger. The persistence of local, heterogeneous expressions of queerness in the non-west is threatened by the globalization of western gay and lesbian cultures and politics. But, as it is at the national scale, the threat is double-edged. Existing as always as the constitutive outside, so it goes

that contained within a queerness threatened by global flows is the power to threaten its oppressor. Globalization and all its ills might somehow be undone through queering. But as it does in the reading of heteronormativity and nationalism, this act occurs from the margins of power. So we must again ask what possibilities for queering – as a dangerous, subversive, resistant act – remain when the centre has been breached. For it has been.

But in the reading that the logic of queer studies at the global scale as I have set it out here allows, it is not the centre of globalization in and of itself that has been penetrated. The breaching of the centre of the nation is still at issue, but as an act undertaken in service of, and so that it might reap the benefits of entanglement within, the global economy. Modernity and humaneness, qualities the possession of which is a prerequisite for entry into the “international community,” can be exhibited by tolerance of minorities, including sexual minorities. Thus the nation, thrown into a crisis of legitimacy by the demands of globalization, can be read as appropriating queerness as a vehicle for the achievement of its normalization within the global playing field. That queerness could reach the centre of globalization in a more direct fashion is, of course, not fathomable since its power is placeless; a trait that allows it to have an impact everywhere while it cannot be impacted upon because it rests nowhere. The inclusion of homosexuality within the new South African nation can therefore be interpreted as a consequence of the impinging of an overarching global realm upon a vulnerable locale/state trying desperately to find its niche within globalization. But another reading is possible.

Erik Swyngedouw states that “scale” is not “an ontologically given and a priori definable geographical territory.” The static depiction of globalization as a placeless

power, however, does not recognize scale as produced in context and thereby flies in the face of this assertion. As Swyngedouw continues, scale is also not “a politically neutral discursive strategy in the construction of narratives” (1997, 140). Particular readings of scalar relationships therefore produce a particular politics. Where a local/ national realm is found to be external to and pitted against a more powerful global realm only a politics of opposition can be envisioned. But the straightforwardness of such a politics is misleading. For when we look for the ways in which scale is produced in place, in a “process that is always deeply heterogeneous, conflictual, and contested” (Swyngedouw 1997, 140), we find that scales overlap and intermingle. As a result, “the discourses on the global or the local...seem to be increasingly out of step with the politics of scale, where the everyday struggle for power and control is fought out” (Swyngedouw 1997, 160-161). So I return now to the inclusion of “sexual orientation” within South Africa’s Equality Clause, this time with an eye towards the production of the global in the nation-building process.

Re-constituted South Africa as a queer globalization

“I cannot even begin to understand why people want lesbian and gay rights. The gays have no problems. They have nice homes and plenty to eat. I don’t see them suffering. No one is persecuting them... We haven’t heard about this problem in South Africa until recently. It seems to be fashionable in the West” (quoted in Cock 2003, 36). Declared in 1987 by Ruth Mompoti, this was the first public statement made by an ANC official on the issue of homosexuality. Pitting South Africa against the west and suggesting that domestic rumblings for gay rights were directly linked to the infiltration of western norms, it inaugurated official debates over the place of homosexuality in

South African culture and politics in the terms of local-global relations; and this was a theme that would persist.

A central theme of the gay and lesbian lobbying effort was the assertion that a homophobic new South Africa would be simply unacceptable to the international community. As the official submission to the Constitutional Assembly by the Gays and Lesbians of the Witwatersrand (GLOW, a prominent member of the NCGLE throughout the constitutional lobbying process that is now virtually defunct) stated, "We urge the Constitutional Assembly to maintain this principled position which has so liberated the gays, lesbians and bisexuals in all communities of South Africa and won the admiration of gays, lesbians and bisexuals and progressive opinion around the world."

In addition to this rhetorical stance, the NCGLE drew heavily on the experience and support of transnational and other domestic gay and lesbian lobbying networks. A library containing information on gay and lesbian movements around the world was compiled, NCGLE members participated heavily in the activities of transnational lobbying organizations by attending their international conferences and rallies and becoming active members of their boards, and donations from gay and lesbian organizations outside South Africa comprised a significant portion of the NCGLE's funds. In this way, an international lesbian and gay solidarity was forged. Discussing a fundraising event for the Coalition held in London by gay and lesbian South Africans living as expatriates in London in concert with British gay and lesbian activists and community members, an article in the Coalition's newsletter, *Equality*, states, "South Africa may be far away from London, but in the Freedom Café that evening there was a definite sense of an international community, for whom South Africa's equality clause is

a symbol of hope” (NCGLE, 1995d, 7). Speculating on the role that the forging of such an international community of gays and lesbians had on developments within South Africa in a speech made at the International Lesbian and Gay Association’s (ILGA) annual meeting in New York in 1994, Simon Nkoli (NCGLE executive committee member and member of the Brussels-based ILGA) stated:

When my co-accused said they wouldn’t be tried with me, their reasoning was that if there was a faggot in the dock with them, there would be less international support for them. Well, I can tell you that when they said this to me, all I needed to do was show them my cell wall – which was covered in messages of support and solidarity that I received from all of you while I was imprisoned. So you, the international lesbian and gay community did so much more than simply giving me personal courage – you also helped the ANC to see that a human rights struggle without a gay rights dimension was unacceptable.

This transnational strategy was indeed an effective one for the NCGLE. As I demonstrate above, the rationale of international acceptability deployed by the Coalition was picked up on by all parties heavily involved in determining the parameters of the new constitution, with the exception of course of the ACDP and its supporters. The ACDP’s approach to the constitution’s framing asserted that South Africa was “not here to please the rest of the world” (letter written to the Constitutional Assembly in support of the ACDP’s position on homosexuality). The threat that a future South Africa retaining the parochialism and isolation of its past would be fostered that is inherent to such logic was of course countered by support for retention of the clause in the name of vanquishing “discrimination deemed unacceptable by the standards of the modern world” (letter written to the Constitutional Assembly in support of the NCGLE’s position on homosexuality). Among other reasons, “sexual orientation” was retained in the Equality Clause because it offered the possibility of re-configuring South Africa’s position within

the international community. The NCGLE couched its argument for gay and lesbian rights in an international framework and the time was an auspicious one in which to do so. That the cold war had just ended was one of the factors that brought about the end of apartheid. But at the same time, it brought about shifts in the global playing field that presented distinct challenges to the new South African regime. The ANC's long and dearly held socialist leanings were suddenly out of synch with the unquestioned global dominance of neoliberal capitalist orthodoxy. The emergence of this new regime at precisely the moment when South Africa was preparing to re-enter the global arena arguably made it easier for the ANC to hear what the NCGLE had to say.

Pressure for the inclusion of "sexual orientation" in the Equality Clause therefore apparently came from without. It seems to have radiated from the global onto the local as the South African gay and lesbian movement became entangled within an international movement that immeasurably helped propel its lobbying efforts forward. As Ruth Mompati stated, the notion of gay rights was a western one, but it took hold in a nation struggling to re-cast the nature of its involvement with an international political economy in which western players were the ones determining the rules of engagement.

Superficially, this reading makes a lot of sense. But it is a misleading one. Digging deeper into Ruth Mompati's disavowal of the rights of homosexuals on behalf of the ANC helps us to trace precisely how.

In short, Mompati's statement was not made on behalf of the ANC at all. She made her judgment on homosexuality without sanction from the party and the ANC subsequently made an effort to undermine it. When British gay activist Peter Tatchell publicized Mompati's statement and openly criticized the ANC for adopting such a

homophobic stance, Thabo Mbeki, who was then working for the ANC in exile in the UK, wrote a letter to British gay magazine *Capital gay* to clarify the his party's position. In it, he explicitly states that the ANC had never been nor ever would be opposed to gay rights. In the same issue of *Capital gay*, an interview conducted by Tatchell also appears in which ANC spokesperson Frene Ginwala states, "ANC policy towards gays and lesbians, and towards other groups in South Africa which are discriminated against, has to be the same because it is an issue of principle enshrined in our Freedom Charter". As the Freedom Charter was penned in 1955, the ANC therefore already had a long heritage of protecting gay and lesbian rights, at least implicitly, when Mompoti made her incongruent statement. And this legacy continued as the phrase "a matter of principle" was peppered liberally throughout the ANC's rhetoric in reference to the inclusion of "sexual orientation" in the Equality Clause. Reporting on a meeting he had with Nelson Mandela, for instance, NCGLE executive committee member Kevan Botha stated, "Mandela made it quite clear that it's a matter of principle for the ANC that everybody must be equal and that there must be no discrimination" (1995b, 11).⁸

The foundation for gay and lesbian rights was therefore already firmly laid within South Africa. That is to say that the queering of the new state did not occur as an act of globalization from without. But at the same time, it is not to eclipse the role of the global in South Africa's re-making, of which the re-framing of the constitution was a significant

⁸ Botha goes on to note that Mandela "did also make the comment that the sexual orientation issue was not a popular one – that there had been a large amount of opposition to it, despite it being a matter of principle for the ANC" (1995b, 11). Another prominent ANC representative, Cheryl Carolus, made a similar qualification when interviewed by the NCGLE. Insisting that non-discrimination for all is a "matter of principle" for the ANC she concedes that this official position was not reflected among the party's rank and file and states, "One must accept that the ANC is made up of very ordinary South Africans who bring with them many of the misinformed views, perspectives and prejudices that exist in society as a whole" (NCGLE 1995c, 4). Nonetheless, the point remains that gay and lesbian rights was indeed a matter of principle for the ANC.

part. My point here is not to re-cast the hierarchy of scale such that agency is found to rest with the local or national rather than the global. It is instead to note that both scales are intertwined and territorially produced. As noted above, members of the NCGLE in the years since the constitution's framing have expressed surprise that there was so little opposition to the protection of gay and lesbian rights within the new South Africa. This indicates that the extensive lobbying effort – including its heavy emphasis on building transnational ties and international justifications – launched in support of the retention of the Equality Clause may have been to a certain extent unnecessary. But necessary or not, it was still consequential. It still played a role in re-casting South Africa as a new *globalized* nation-state in particular ways.

In the 1992 document titled *Ready to Govern*, in which the ANC set out the “policy guidelines for a democratic South Africa” that it had adopted at its national conference in that year, it is stated that:

ANC policy will contribute to the democratization of international political and economic relations, and so *help secure a global context* within which a democratic South Africa will be able to coexist peacefully and to cooperate on a democratic basis with its neighbours in the region and further afield (African National Congress, 26; emphasis mine).

I have emphasized the words “help secure the global context” in this quote because they guide us to a different way in which we can read the queering of the new South Africa as global, they help us to see queer globalization not as an imposition by queerness as a globalizing force “out there” but as an act undertaken within a domestic polity that is recasting both its national and global dimensions simultaneously and inextricably. In Cindy Patton's words, “globalization precedes nation” (2002, 202). For as long as the nation has existed it has existed within something beyond itself. And this beyond cannot

be separate for it requires its composite part, the nation, for survival. The ANC here recognizes this by noting that the global is not an overarching sphere but a context that is to be shaped by the nation. So the queering of the new South Africa is an act of queer globalization. But it is not an act initiated from without. It should not be characterized as an expansion of a human rights culture with western origins to the tip of Africa. Rather, this queer globalization emerged out of and is inseparable from a nation-building process. Globalization might, therefore, be conceptualized as already queer from within.

From appropriation to the queer globalized nation-state

[Queer] will have to remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned.

-Judith Butler (1993, 19)

There is no peace for those caught in the journey of becoming.

-Njabulo Ndebele (1998a, 123)

Voicing a familiar line of argument, Emilio Bejel (2001) argues in reference to the “gay Cuban nation” that “the queer body...can offer the possibility of a new perspective” because homosexuality is an integral part, by *negation*, of the national narrative and as such continually threatens to destabilize it. When an integral part, by *acceptance*, of the national narrative, queerness must therefore by implication cease to be a progressive force. This position is in concurrence with the thrust of debates on the normalization of homosexuality within queer studies that I discuss in depth in chapter two. A common argument within those debates is the need to connect local (read: western) queer cultures and politics with their “impacts” at the global (read: non-western) level. In part, I have heeded this advice. I have ventured out from the west and found that, entrenched into a new constitution the adoption of which Mandela himself referred to as marking South Africa’s transition from a “horrible past” to a “normal country” (SAPA

1996, 1), homosexuals at the southern tip of Africa enjoy an official seal of approval still rare around the world. In other words, I have found that queerness is normal in the non-west too. But upon making this finding, I followed a different analytic path, one that could only be pursued outside the logic set out in the normalization debates. In rejection of the notion that the global unilaterally and discernibly impacts upon the local, I argue with Gillian Hart that we could usefully “advance an understanding of multiple trajectories as spatially interconnected sets of practices...that actively produce and drive the process we call ‘globalization’” (2002a, 14). And thinking about global queerness thus, as always multiply scaled and flowing in more directions than just downward, has allowed me to read the normalization of homosexuality differently. It has allowed me to see it as in fact a queering.

Jarrod Hayes argues that the verb “queering” signifies “a critical practice in which nonnormative sexualities infiltrate dominant discourses to loosen their political stronghold” (2000, 7). South Africa’s constitutional framing, a process within which homosexuality was explicitly accepted by the nation, performed just such a task. It discredited the remaining vestiges of the discourse of apartheid and sought to undermine postcolonial visions of despotism. And given that scale is multiply constituted, this process in which a new queer nation came into being can also be read as an act of queer globalization. Thus the logic of appropriation that runs throughout work within queer studies on both queerness and the nation and, more incipiently, queerness and globalization should be re-thought so that we might begin to think through the significance of the existence of queer globalizations and queer states – or more aptly, queer globalized states. We have expended much energy thinking through queerness as

scapegoat for the globalized nation-state. And as long as leaders like Robert Mugabe continue to rule, we must continue to do so. But the South African example tells us that we must also recognize queerness as its potential saviour.

The suggestion that there are queer globalized nation-states in existence could easily be taken as a rather grand claim. So I want to explicitly state here that it is not intended as such. Queering, as formulated within queer theory as a disrupting, threatening, destabilizing act originating from the margins, has not surprisingly been cast as a necessarily progressive force. In this light, the claim that there are queer globalized nation-states might be taken as a declaration that our work is done. On the contrary, it is only just beginning for this realization insists that we rethink what we thought we knew; that is, that we rethink what queering is and does. As I have demonstrated here, queering does indeed disrupt, threaten and destabilize. But it does not necessarily do so from the margins and this fact cannot but alter its outcomes. In other words, where Bejel argues that queerness "can offer the possibility of a new perspective" because homosexuality is an integral part, by *negation*, of the national narrative and as such continually threatens to destabilize it, I argue that the South African case demonstrates that even when homosexuality is an integral part, by *acceptance*, of a national narrative it may still offer this "possibility of a new perspective" and may thus still act as a threat. But what this threat does is at issue.

For instance, the queer globalized nation-state that is the new South Africa gives us cause for both optimism and alarm. It remains committed to democratization, the protection of human rights and international cooperation while adopting a leadership role on the continent by spearheading such initiatives as the re-structuring of the Organization

of African Unity and NEPAD in the name of African Renaissance. These initiatives and domestic economic policy on the whole, however, receive mixed reviews for their adherence to neoliberal economic doctrine. Along with the persistence of sky high unemployment and poverty levels, rampant xenophobia within migration policies and the incredible mishandling of the HIV/ AIDS epidemic are also particularly discouraging.⁹ Nonetheless, that homosexuals are protected in the new constitution means that they are part of this new nation for better or for worse. And though it is still fragile, the transition to democracy in South Africa is an important experiment, for it is “an experiment on a continent and in a world where democracy, dignity and equality are precious commodities” (Cameron 2001, 648).

What this experiment suggests to me is that the queer globalized nation-state must be consistently interrogated since it is in constant re-negotiation and thus is never complete. For instance, black nationalism and white conservatism, two threats that the constitution sought to put asunder still loom within South Africa. And the constitution continues to help mitigate these threats. In one example, a July 2003 letter to the editor of the *Mail and Guardian* that attacks purported impartiality in the South African Broadcasting Company’s coverage of Zimbabwean affairs sarcastically states:

Forget impartiality, it’s a “Western concept.” Let’s rather be “African” in our broadcasting – not African like the pre-colonial government of the Xhosa, based on hearing all points of view. Not African as in our own Constitution. So what if in the end we become just like the colonial rulers we fought so hard to overcome? (*Mail & Guardian* 2003, 24).

⁹ On these topics, see: Adam, van Zyl Slabbert & Moodley 1998; Bond 2002; Crush 1999; Nuttal & Michael 2001; Sitze 2004; Vale 2002.

As the new South Africa continues to be shaped, because it is a queer South Africa gays and lesbians can fully participate in this process. As former NCGLE executive member and now prominent AIDS activist Zackie Achmat expresses:

I always get angry...when international gays lecture us on the need to get angry. We've been angry, we've been on the streets, in prison. Now we have to bring activism and a sense of commitment to gay and lesbian issues – and to the reconstruction of the country (*Exit* 1995c, 7).

Heidi Nast not so long ago argued that in the context of transnationalism there are “all kinds of contemporary anxieties over the heterosexualized pure and solidly bordered body of the nation being penetrated, threatened, overcome, and/ or dissolved by a plethora of frightening foreign microbes and dangers” (1998, 195). In such a context, we might read queerness, as Cindy Patton does, as “a kind of unstoppable alterity that flies beneath the annihilating screen of the nation” (2002, 210). But when the globalized nation-state queers itself on its own terms, the threat that homosexuality poses is re-cast. The contagion of alterity comes to mean something different as queering transmogrifies into an enabling and valuable rather than simply dangerous and subversive act. We have been keen to explore the performativity of queerness when the division between resistance and oppression seems clear. Parodic repetition continues to occur when the dynamics of power have shifted and these categories become blurred. Queering from the centre still lays bare the hegemon, it just may not do so as dramatically as we think it should.

My point here is simply that a queering is nonetheless still a queering. It demands that we not allow ourselves to look the other way by enforcing a radical separation

between the "normal" and the "queer". That what it means to be queer hangs in the balance is a fact with which we must reckon.

CHAPTER V

Imagining a gay and lesbian movement: Class, community and the spaces of politics

This is what I say to my comrades in the struggle who ask me why I waste time fighting for moffies¹ and this is what I say to white gay men or women who ask me why I spend so much time talking about apartheid when I should be fighting for gay rights. I am black and I am gay. I cannot separate the two parts of me into secondary or primary struggle. They will be all one struggle.

The late, black, gay South African activist Simon Nkoli made this proclamation in 1990 while speaking to a crowd that gathered in the streets of Johannesburg to participate in South Africa's first Gay and Lesbian Pride March (*Simon and I* 2002). In addition to being the key organizer behind this march and, in 1988, a founding member of Gays and Lesbians of the Witswatersrand (or GLOW, a non-racial, township-based gay and lesbian grassroots organization that remained active until 1999), Nkoli was invited onto the Executive Committee of the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE or the Coalition) upon its formation in 1994. Without a doubt, his membership on that committee was instrumental to ensuring the success of the Coalition's lobbying effort to retain the inclusion of the term "sexual orientation" in post-apartheid South Africa's constitutional Equality Clause.

The gay and lesbian movement in South Africa was, at the time of the lobbying effort, at best a weak one that struggled to find a place in the political climate of the day. The country's most high profile gay organization, the Gay Association of South Africa, had its membership in the International Lesbian and Gay Association revoked in 1985 for its refusal to adopt a position on the treatment of non-white South Africans. On a brighter note, the Organization of Lesbian and Gay Activists (OLGA) emerged in 1987 with anti-

¹ See Chapter three, footnote 11 for an explanation of this term.

apartheid leanings and ties to the ANC. Nonetheless, it was Nkoli's credentials as an anti-apartheid activist² that firmly established the connection between discrimination on the basis of race and discrimination on the basis of sexuality that the NCGLE (as the voice of all its affiliate members including OLGA) sought to make. As a result, the lobbying effort achieved its goal and the Coalition can now lay claim to the rather unique distinction of having successfully included the issue of homosexuality in a liberation struggle.

As I mention above, whether or not we can even say that a gay and lesbian movement existed in South Africa prior to the NCGLE's formation is debatable. In fact, that many question whether or not such a movement exists at present is a point that will be centrally explored in what follows. In any case, the new South Africa is a place in which discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sex, culture, religion *and* sexual orientation (among many other grounds listed in the Equality Clause) is prohibited. And the reason for this is because the NCGLE articulated the gay and lesbian movement's (even if this movement were only an idea) fight for equality as one that was inseparable from the fight for liberation from other oppressions – most notably, but certainly not limited to, racial oppression. It articulated its struggle, in other words, as one that must be advanced as a necessarily coalitional one. South African gay and lesbian politics and organizing in the post-apartheid era, then, offers a useful test case for the strategy of working across difference and in coalition that has become such a popular proposition in Euroamerican queer theorizing of late.

² In 1994, Nkoli was arrested after a rent boycott in his township and held in custody for two years before charged, with 21 other United Democratic Front activists, with treason in what became known as the Delmas Treason Trial. While in prison, he "came out" to his fellow accused, many of whom would later become prominent members of the ANC, and insisted that the gay and lesbian struggle was part of the liberation struggle. He thus effectively put a black face on what had historically been a white struggle.

This chapter does indeed explore this case as such a test. It does so by examining the fates of two prominent South African gay and lesbian political/ community organizations – the NCGLE/ Equality Project³ and Johannesburg Pride – from the early 1990s until 2002. It considers their sincere attempts to work across the lines of race and particularly class so that the impressive rights gains made for homosexuals in the constitution and the legislature might have real effects on the daily lives of gays and lesbians. Members of both organizations largely conclude that these efforts have failed. Rather than focusing on this fact, I look at how the strategy of a racialized class politics utilized by both the NCGLE/ Equality Project and Pride was disciplined by the legacy of the constitutional lobbying effort. I look at the ways in which its failure might be read not only for the political spaces it has foreclosed but also for those it has produced. And I look at what such a reading can contribute to a certain body of social and political theorizing on the left that struggles to reconcile a politics of recognition with a politics of redistribution.

A note on narrative method

The text that follows unfolds contrapuntally. Passages that tell the empirical stories of the NCGLE/ Equality Project and Pride are interspersed with theoretical reflections. These latter sections are not intended as theoretical subtitles for “real life” evidence. Rather, this tacking back and forth between theory and empirics plays into the artificial divide that suggests that theory can be pried apart from reality. At the same time, however, it undermines it by highlighting the ways in which the passages that I present as evidence are inevitably inflected by my reading of theory and my theoretical claims tethered inextricably to my

³ The NCGLE was restructured in 1999 and has been known thereafter as the Equality Project.

knowledge of the empirical. This simultaneous consolidation of and threat to the tension between theory and empirics is intended to highlight the futility of attempts to resolve this separation while presenting a commitment to its constant negotiation. In addition, my narrative strategy is intended to avoid the attribution of too great a level of coherence to the diverse voices within the theoretical literature with which I engage.

Three introductions to the story of the NCGLE

As we negotiate the difficult task of normalizing freedom, it will be important for us to realize that a political accommodation such as we have achieved does not imply that all the moral, intellectual, and philosophical questions have been solved. To stop at that point is to risk repeating the apartheid mistake of making politics everything.

-Njabulo Ndebele (1998b, 25)

Beginning at the beginning is a difficult thing to do. For such a thing does not announce itself. It must be called into being.

The NCGLE's successful constitutional lobbying effort could be (and often has been) said to have ushered in a new era for gays and lesbians in South Africa, a post-apartheid era in which they are enfranchised. From this starting point, we can tell a story of the gay and lesbian organization that has achieved not only the first constitutional guarantee of non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, but also the most rapid and wide-ranging transformation on the issue of sexuality-based rights anywhere in the world.

Since the drafting of the interim constitution in 1994, the legislature has taken it upon itself to rewrite eighteen pieces of legislation such that equitable treatment of homosexuals would be ensured. As a result, in South Africa it is now illegal to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation in the realms of property law, tax law,

estate law, refugee law, labour relations law, and in the public provision of services such as education, health care, protection against domestic violence and housing. Also, hate speech in relation to sexual identity and the registration of political parties that propagate it are prohibited.

This extensive list of protections has been further enhanced by the results of court challenges launched by the NCGLE on behalf of gays and lesbians. These cases have achieved the decriminalization of gay male sex acts (lesbian sex was never formally criminalized), the recognition of the same sex partners of persons holding private medical schemes and both private and public pension funds as eligible recipients of spousal benefits, the recognition of the same sex partners of South African citizens and permanent residents for the purposes of immigration to South Africa, and the recognition of the right of same sex couples to jointly adopt children. In fact, the only remaining legal battle to be won is the attainment of the right to marry. And, in November 2004, the NCGLE won a partial victory in this domain when South Africa's Supreme Court of Appeal ruled that under the Constitution the common law concept of marriage must be developed to include same-sex partners. While the court did not strike down the existing law, a law that specifies marriage as of one man and one woman, it called on the government to amend the law to include same-sex couples. The government has not yet acted on this recommendation. But there is no reason to presume that it will not.

As demonstrated in Figure 5.1, a cartoon satirizing the case in which the NCGLE won access to spousal benefits for its co-appellants (a lesbian couple) in its court challenge to the private medical aid scheme Polmed, the foundation for the changes to

South African law that have been made both legislatively and through jurisprudence was laid by the inclusion of “sexual orientation” in the post-apartheid constitution’s Equality



Figure 5.1 Cartoon by Jonathan Shapiro. *The Sowetan* (Johannesburg). 06 February 1998. Clause. Though this clause was initially put into the interim constitution by individuals involved in the drafting process who were sympathetic to the plight of sexual minorities and supported due to the strong human rights commitment of the victors of the liberation struggle, its retention in the final constitution is widely acknowledged to have much to do with the efforts of the NCGLE. Thus the rights gains listed above are its legacy. And it is an impressive one.

But we might also begin the story of the NCGLE at another point. We might focus instead on the NCGLE’s formation in 1994 and its Executive Committee’s arrival at the strategy that it would utilize until the constitution was ratified in 1996. As mentioned in chapter four, the Coalition’s lobbying effort was a very conservative kind of activism. It chose not to rattle potential adversaries in South African society by making specific demands around such volatile issues as the definition of family, adoption and the

recognition of same sex partners as "spouses" for the purposes of benefits. As Kevan Botha, the Coalition's chief parliamentary lobbyist, put it at the height of the campaign, "the simple message is: we want equality and the removal of unjust laws" (1995c, 4). As shown above, the embrace of this strategy of persuasion rather than confrontation did not preclude the eventual attainment of extended rights and privileges for homosexuals. But, while it limited its immediate political goals, it also limited the extent to which it sought to politicize South African gays and lesbians. For its cautious strategy included a conscious choice not to rely on, and thereby foster, a grassroots movement. The Executive Committee decreed "direct political action, civil disobedience, picketing, demonstrations and protest type actions" to be "inappropriate." Instead, face-to-face meetings between carefully chosen NCGLE lobbyists and "parliamentarians, opinion-makers and allies" were its tactic of choice (NCGLE, 1995b).

As mentioned above, the gay and lesbian movement in South Africa at the time of the NCGLE's founding was a weak one – if indeed it can be said to have existed at all. But whether or not we can call them the components of a movement, there were up to seventy gay and lesbian organizations in existence throughout the country. While it must be noted that it is by now well known that only a handful of these organizations were well-established and reasonably active entities (the vast majority consisted of no more than a fax machine and one or two contact persons), as its name suggests, the Coalition was the umbrella body of these organizations. Despite this fact, its members did not give direction to the NCGLE. Rather, they were expected to participate in the lobbying effort only when called upon by the Coalition's Executive Committee to carry out specific tasks.

Perhaps the greatest contribution that the member organizations made to the lobbying effort was their mere existence. As a member of the NCGLE's founding Executive Committee told me in an interview in 2002, "the community was made through the national coalition. Or the *idea* of a community was made by this idea of an umbrella body...Creating the idea of a unified gay and lesbian movement was what the coalition did." So, the NCGLE performed the very "community"⁴ that it claimed to be acting at the behest of.

Two factors were key to the success of this performance. First was discipline. While there were not many active member organizations, some of them entertained more radical notions of queer activism than did the NCGLE. So, it is not surprising that its vision for the "way forward" was not simply accepted without contestation. For example, in an open letter to the "gay and lesbian community", a member of GLOW's (Gays and Lesbians of the Witwatersrand) Executive Committee stated, "we need a movement which includes as many gay people as possible, not an elite group of moffie storm troopers." This statement was intended as an outright denunciation of the Coalition's decision to employ white lawyer Kevan Botha as its parliamentary lobbyist. Botha was a controversial figure because of his previous involvement with GASA (Gay Association of South Africa). As a member of that organization, he had publicly defended its apolitical stance when it faced expulsion from ILGA. The Coalition justified its decision to include Botha on the basis of his legal expertise and the credibility he would bring to a

⁴ There is a substantial literature that explores how "communities" are socially produced and therefore challenges assumptions that they are fixed, finite, already-existing entities on behalf of which predictable and often exclusionary political claims can be made. In other words, much theoretical reflection resonates with the sentiment expressed by the NCGLE member quoted above; that is, that communities are materially and discursively constructed. The term "community" appears many times throughout the remainder of this chapter. I do not henceforth place it in scare quotes simply because such a tactic makes for cumbersome prose. Nonetheless, I wish to make it clear from the outset that wherever it appears, I utilize the term as a construction.

lobbying effort that they sought to give a respectable air. Interestingly, shortly after penning this letter, its author joined the Coalition's Executive Committee and dutifully carried out its strategy. This testifies not only to the top-down nature of the lobbying effort but also to its extraordinary ability to discipline the "movement".⁵

Of the various other conflicts that arose between the Coalition and its affiliates, many regarded the Coalition's tendency to deplete the capacity of affiliates due to its secondment of their personnel. An incident involving Simon Nkoli posed a very serious threat to the Coalition in this regard. Citing over-involvement with a number of gay and lesbian organizations (including GLOW and the Township AIDS Project), Nkoli submitted his resignation to the Executive Committee in June 1995. The Executive Committee scrambled to convince him of his importance to the success of the Coalition's historical campaign for constitutional protection. They succeeded and, though they recognized that his resignation was implicitly a comment on the Coalition's disregard for the sustainability of its affiliates, they continued to operate as they had before, with priority placed on the national structure. By effectively managing such conflicts as these, the NCGLE managed to keep its individual and organizational affiliations intact and stay its course.

The second factor that facilitated the Coalition's successful performance of the role of umbrella body for the gay and lesbian community was the way in which it maintained a façade of representativeness. Though the make-up of the executive committee and its key lobbyists was overwhelmingly white, the Coalition knew that "the image which we present must be one of racial and gender diversity, reflecting the

⁵ Incidentally, Botha went on to be a valuable spokesperson for the Coalition and did embrace the link it made between discrimination on the basis of sexuality and discrimination on the basis of race.

composition of our community” (NCGLE, 1995b). Thus, though its game plan came from the top, it relied on representative members of the community to carry it out. The racial and gender composition of letters written to the Constitutional Assembly in support of the inclusion of “sexual orientation” in the Equality Clause, for instance, was carefully managed. So was that of the groups of “ordinary” lesbian and gay community members that were organized to attend public forums held by the Constitutional Assembly in which the issue of homosexuality was expected to arise. What these individuals were to say, however, was always carefully crafted and conveyed to them by the Executive Committee. For instance, in the letter writing campaign, individuals were strongly discouraged from drafting their own texts. Rather, they were asked to sign their names to copy written by the NCGLE. This copy read:

Sexual orientation was included in the equality clause of the interim Constitution. The final draft released for discussion also includes sexual orientation. I/ we believe that it should be kept in the new constitution so that everyone including heterosexuals, bisexuals, gay and lesbian people will be protected from discrimination and prejudice. I/ we demand that equality for all, [regardless of sexual orientation, as defined above] should be the basis of our final constitution.

So, though its legal gains are impressive, upon considering the way in which the Coalition went about securing them, one can see why its lobbying campaign has been criticized as elitist, undemocratic and unrepresentative of the gay and lesbian community (see Cock 2003; Croucher 2002; and, Stychin 1996). My point in raising these issues here, however, is not to chastise the Executive Committee for having chosen the route that it did. There are some indications that the NCGLE had more room in which to manoeuvre than it utilized. After all, the term “sexual orientation” was already in the interim constitution and all the major political parties had given assurances that it would

stay there.⁶ But there are also indications that caution was necessary. In a meeting with gay and lesbian lobbyists in early 1995, Mandela himself made it clear that “the sexual orientation issue was not a popular one – that there had been a large amount of opposition to it, despite it being a matter of principle for the ANC” (*Exit* 1995b, 11). Though we can never know whether the Coalition’s strategy was the “right” or “wrong” one, my point is that we would be wise to keep in mind the role that its performance of community has played in creating its legacy.

It must also be pointed out that the NCGLE knew that this legacy would hinder the achievement of their desired outcomes of equality for and the empowerment of all South African gays and lesbians. So it expressed a need to revamp itself and thus create a new starting point for its history. Thus the story of the NCGLE begins yet again. As Kevan Botha stated immediately after the constitution’s ratification:

Leaving the precincts of parliament, I was struck by the enormity of the work that lies ahead. Rights which cannot be exercised are dead rights. The challenge is not the passing of a constitution. The real challenge lies in changing public perceptions, empowering our own community to exercise those rights, and safeguarding the democratic principles which allow freedom and equality to flourish. That is the challenge to every gay man and lesbian women in South Africa. *We’re going to need a strong gay [sic] movement after all*” (Botha 1996b, 49; my emphasis).

⁶ In June 1995, almost a full year before the constitution’s ratification, the gay and lesbian newspaper *Exit* reported the following assurances from major political parties. “[National Party spokesperson] Camerer was scathing about Meshoe [leader of the African Christian Democratic Party] and confirmed the NP’s support for the sexual orientation clause.” The ANC’s Enver Surty stated: “We are definitely in favour of retaining the sexual orientation clause in its current form. We understand that (equality clause 8(2)...) as a reference to any kind of inequality or discrimination, and that includes sexual orientation.” And Dene Smuts from the Democratic Party said: “The DP was the first party to come out explicitly in favour of gay rights, even before the current constitution was drafted. Our own equality clause included specific reference to sexual orientation, so it goes without saying that we support the formulation in Clause 8(2)” (*Exit* 1995a, p. 3). By May 1995, and so prior to the appearance of this article, assurances from the Freedom Front and the Pan Africanist Congress that these parties would not oppose the Equality Clause’s wording had been given to Coalition lobbyists.

In their debriefing after the constitution was ratified, all members of the Executive Committee endorsed the notion that, as the Coalition went forward, "everything should be revisited."

As part of this renewal, the Coalition's constituents were also for the first time given some depth in their description. In the following passage taken from the Minutes of their National Conference in December 1995, the NCGLE looked forward to the post-constitution era and determined that:

The movement must identify and define its needs, goals and objectives. This exercise must not be left 'to a few people at the top' but be an undertaking and process involving all affiliate organizations and members of the coalition. Development must be one of our priorities. *The majority of the Coalition's members are poor, have been racially discriminated against* and do not have equal access to resources. The Coalition needs to consider the issue of providing support services to address these problems. People need to be advised of their rights and provided with assistance in demanding those rights (my emphasis).

The NCGLE's rhetorical commitment to building a strong lesbian and gay movement and to its "poor and black⁷" constituents would persist. But it would come up against the formidable challenges presented by the legacies of both its strategic choices and the legal gains they cemented.

Identity as "merely cultural"?: A tale of two theorists

Nancy Fraser:

Rather than focusing on a politics of "recognition," we need to work towards "distributive" improvements such as "universalist social-welfare programs, steeply progressive taxation, macroeconomic policies aimed at creating full employment, a large nonmarket sector, significant public and/ or collective ownership and

⁷ The term "black" can often be generically read in South African popular discourse as an umbrella term that also encompasses the South African racial groupings "coloured" and "Asian." In references made to "blacks" by the organizations I consider in this chapter, the NCGLE/ Equality Project and Pride, the term is indeed used generically. But considering that the term "black" is often invoked when talking about township populations, it likely is intended to encompass people that would fall into the categories "black" and "coloured."

democratic decision making about basic socio-economic priorities" (Fraser 1997, 25-6).

Judith Butler:

"Is it possible to distinguish, even analytically, between a lack of cultural recognition and a material oppression, when the very definition of legal 'personhood' is rigorously circumscribed by cultural norms that are indissociable from their material effects? For example, in those instances in which lesbians and gays are excluded from state-sanctioned notions of the family (which is, according to both tax and property law, an economic unit); stopped at the border, deemed inadmissible to citizenship; selectively denied the status of freedom of speech and freedom of assembly; are denied the right (as members of the military) to speak his or her desire; or are deauthorized by law to make emergency medical decisions about one's dying lover, to receive the property of one's dead lover, to receive from the hospital the body of one's dead lover – do not these examples mark the 'holy family' once again constraining the routes by which property interests are regulated and distributed?" (1998, 41).

Nancy Fraser:

"Is it necessary to transform the economic structure of contemporary capitalism in order to redress the economic liabilities of homosexuals?"

"Empirically...it is highly implausible that gay and lesbian struggles threaten capitalism in its actually existing historical form.

"[T]he economic disabilities of homosexuals are better understood as effects of heterosexism in the relations of recognition than as hardwired in the structure of capitalism" (1998, 144; 146; 147).

The debate between Judith Butler and Nancy Fraser from which these excerpts are taken is well known to feminist and queer theorists. There is much at stake in these words as they pertain to the advancement of an identity politics that contributes to rather than hinders a leftist vision. Butler and Fraser agree that the economic and the cultural/ political are intertwined. But they disagree over the inherent ability of identity politics movements to deal with this fact.

In David Bernans' assessment, the outcome of this debate is a "stalemate". He states:

Butler is clearly onto something when she points out that the economic injustices faced by queers are marginalized by a theoretical apparatus that can only see cultural misrecognition in queer politics. Yet, Fraser is equally justified in sticking to her guns on the question of an analytical distinction that is necessary to understand a particular historical epoch where politics and culture, on the one hand, and economics, on the other, have been uncoupled to an extent unseen in previous epochs (2002, 50).

This is an analysis with which I have no quarrel. In many places, queers face economic hardship because they are queers. Equally widespread is the problematic tendency within strategies to redress cultural misrecognition to treat economic inequity only as a side-effect of the experience of discrimination. But there are places in which neither of these foundational statements holds true. South Africa is one such locale.

In South Africa, gays and lesbians are no longer (at least officially) the scapegoats of the system. The rights delimited by Butler as denied to homosexuals – and many more – have been met in the post-apartheid era. Also, the South African gay and lesbian movement is not guilty of the “vulgar culturalism” with which Fraser takes issue. They do not “misunderstand” the character of the links between cultural injustices and economic ones by presuming that overcoming homophobia will augur the end of capitalist maldistribution. As part of the liberation struggle, the gay and lesbian struggle in South Africa is fundamentally about politically *and* economically empowering the previously disenfranchised.

That is not to say, however, that the arguments put forward by both Butler and Fraser have nothing to tell us about the state of South African identity politics

or that the state of South African identity politics has nothing to tell us about the contentions made by Fraser and Butler.

Fraser was right. The redress of economic liabilities specifically relating to homosexuality has not transformed the economic structure of contemporary capitalism in South Africa. That larger struggle remains as intense a battle as ever as, for the last decade, the country has been mired in neoliberal economic reforms that have not brought about significant redistribution of wealth.⁸ But gay and lesbian identity politics is by no means a “merely cultural” part of this new dispensation. As the NCGLE points out, while everyday discrimination – and its economic ramifications – persist, many gays and lesbians are unable to engage in expensive court battles to fight these injustices. In addition, black gays and lesbians in particular endure economic injustice beyond that tied to their sexual orientation. On the other hand, while the politics of misrecognition has negative economic ramifications, so the politics of recognition can have positive ones. In South Africa, political enfranchisement has emboldened certain facets of the community to engage in an economics of the pink market. As we will see, this development has in fact played a significant role in various attempts to merge the politics of recognition and distribution within queer organizing.

Butler was also right. Economic redistribution cannot be instrumentally achieved beyond the politics of identity. For class or coalitional politics are performative. They are bound up in the terms through which they are advanced. In South Africa, the ways in which the politics of recognition were attained haunts the pursuit of a politics of distribution in so many ways. Thus we ought to

⁸ For insightful appraisals of the post-apartheid era to date, see Barnard & Farred (eds), 2004.

reconsider the relationship of recognition and distribution as something other than two terms that can be easily merged.

Making rights matter

Gays in SA face an exciting future from the legal perspective. They have to meet a dual challenge. On the one hand, they have to remove a negative. On the other, they have to create a positive.

-Cameron, Jones & Kohler

Though the goal of building a gay and lesbian movement was put on hold by the NCGLE until the constitutional lobbying effort was over, it had been recognized as a task that needed to be carried out by the Coalition since its inception. Upon its founding in December 1994, the NCGLE's mandate set out the following four objectives for the organization:

- To ensure the retention of the sexual orientation clause in the new constitution;
- To decriminalize same-sex conduct;
- To prepare constitutional litigation to challenge sexual discrimination, and;
- To train a strong and effective gay and lesbian leadership.

In later funding documents, the last of these objectives was extended to building "a representative gay and lesbian movement in South Africa". And this goal would be iterated again and again by the NCGLE throughout the remainder of its existence. In fact, one of its staff members made the following statement in reference to the Coalition's last National Conference before it restructured and became the Equality Project:

All-in-all the conference was a good stepping stone for the creation of a movement within the lgbt [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered]⁹

⁹ The NCGLE/ Equality Project and Pride (which I will look at later in this chapter) both commonly use the acronym LGBT. I, however, use the terms "gay and lesbian" and "queer" instead. This is not meant as a move to exclude bisexuals and the transgendered. It is merely a tacit acknowledgement that both of these organizations work almost exclusively for the well-being of gays and lesbians. While "LGBT" is used in

community and will undoubtedly set the agenda for lesbian and gay equality in South Africa and Southern Africa for the next two to five years. *Forward to a strong lesbian and gay movement!*" (Nhlapo 1999, 7; emphasis in original).

The Coalition also continued to define its purpose by the need to serve "poor, black gays and lesbians." In 1997, the NCGLE's director, Mazibuko Jara declared that:

The origins of the NCGLE is firmly rooted in the struggle for human rights in South Africa and as a result our movement is far more focused on legal and constitutional issues than on the concept of "gay liberation". In this process there is the risk of the "grassroots" of the community to be left behind. The Coalition acknowledges this and is eager to rectify it (quoted in *Exit* 1997, p.3).

And in 1998, he specified clearly who this "grassroots" of the community is:

The majority of lesbian and gay people in South Africa are poor and black and are equally affected by unemployment, poor education and illiteracy, lack of housing, lack of access to water and electricity, poverty and crime as the majority of South Africans are (*Gay SA* 1998, p. 16).

As the reader has likely inferred from the facts that the Coalition was still looking forward to the "creation of a movement" in 1999 and its Director was still accurately able to assert that the majority of South Africa's lesbian and gay people were still "poor and black" only one year earlier, the NCGLE failed to achieve its goal of changing the everyday lives of the country's homosexual citizens – at least in the ways it had intended to do so. Acknowledging that it had been unable to reach its lofty goals, the Coalition disbanded after its National Conference in 1999. It then reformulated as the Equality Project, a freestanding non-governmental organization that has set out its organizational objectives as follows:

- Promote commitment in the Human Rights and Legal Rights and broader democratic movement to LGBTI Equality and Equity;

these organizations' official documentation, individuals involved with them without fail referred almost exclusively to "gays and lesbians" or "queers."

- Promote equality before the law for all persons irrespective of their Sexual Orientation;
- Reform and repeal laws that discriminate;
- Influence the legislative processes to secure full recognition of the right to equality, and;
- Challenge discrimination through litigation, lobbying, advocacy, public education and political mobilization.

No longer positioning itself as at the vanguard of a movement, the Equality Project now focuses its efforts explicitly and almost entirely in the legal realm.¹⁰

Three factors are largely considered responsible for the Coalition's demise as an umbrella organization for "the movement". First, it never managed to shake the internal tendency towards elitism that was fostered in its early days. Nor did it manage to disrupt the circulation of widespread images held by the public that it was an elite organization run by and catering to the white, affluent gay and lesbian community. As one of its former directors stated:

¹⁰ While the Coalition had nominal funding set aside and staff dedicated to a "development" project through which outreach activities in townships were undertaken, the Equality Project has done away with this area of work and now focuses completely on its work in the legal arena. The focus of its activities in this realm has been the pursuit of a court case on the issue of same-sex marriage. Through this case, staff members hoped to pick up on the "Recognize our Relationships" campaign of 1998 and thus mobilize the community. In a 2003 interview, one staff member even went so far as to say, "I think that through this marriage campaign we're trying to put together a movement." Though the battle in the constitutional court over this issue has already been won, the Equality Project's attempts to galvanize a movement have again failed. Some workshops were held in which organizations doing work related to gay and lesbian issues were encouraged to bring this issue to the gay and lesbian community. But it was an issue that "the community" just did not buy into. As one staff member of a Johannesburg-based media organization catering to the black lesbian and gay community told me: "[Black gays and lesbians are] dealing with more fundamental issues like violence. Like if their parents find out that they're gay they're out of a home, they don't have any family support. Among black people family structure, family system is crucial... So, marriage, being able to get married in a western sense... most black people don't have that kind of marriage anyway and if they do it is after their customary marriage. If there is payment of lobola [bride-price], who's going to pay lobola for whom in a same-sex relationship. It's really, it's not a number one issue for black people. Black people are dealing with I need a job, black people are dealing with where I live in the township if people find out that I'm gay I'm going to be chased out, I'm going to be beaten, I'm going to be raped. These are the things that they're dealing with on a daily basis."

Those influential players, they're always there, they're still present, they're still hanging around in the backdrop. So you feel it in terms of trying to sway those people because they are very influential. Trying to sway those people into trying to really pursue broader objectives and truer, more representative objectives is difficult. But further you feel it when you are dealing with lesbian and gay people out there because they very much still see the organization as being led by white men. And it doesn't matter how you change the staff composition, that stuff doesn't matter...that legacy is still there (interview, July 2003).

Though the staff composition of the Equality Project (the NCGLE's successor organization) is indeed compositionally representative of broader South African society in terms of race and gender, the perception that it caters disproportionately to the white sector of the gay and lesbian community is not without basis. One of its current staff members states, "if you look at our client base at the legal advice centre, I'm going to be honest that most of our clients are white. Why is that? That is for the simple reason that we are based in Johannesburg. We're not accessible to people in townships that can't travel."

Second, the Coalition felt that it did not receive enough support from sectors of the gay and lesbian community who they viewed as having become apathetic now that their rights were affirmed. A former Executive Committee member states:

There was recently a young gay activist from India who spent some time in South Africa and he raised a point at a public forum. We were showing a movie...and that very day there was a critical hearing at the constitutional court and there were a handful of gay and lesbian people there and he wanted to know what was going on in South Africa in that there are all these amazing changes and developments and yet who goes to the constitutional court... I think I said to him slightly flippantly that people were shopping (interview, July 2003).

Along similar lines, a current member of the Equality Project's staff states, "The movement lost a lot of momentum after the inclusion of sexual orientation in section 9 of

the constitution. After that people weren't so worried about securing their rights anymore."

The final, and most significant, factor is straightforward mismanagement. In an independent report by organizational development consultants Nell and Shapiro that was commissioned by the NCGLE, and upon the recommendation of which the Coalition restructured itself, it is baldly stated that the Coalition simply set unrealistic goals for itself. They state that the NCGLE, while achieving impressive legislative gains that met three of four of its initial organizational objectives, "failed conspicuously to develop gay and lesbian grassroots leadership and to build a social movement" (Nell and Shapiro 1999, 2). And they declare that these goals were patently unrealistic from the start. The Coalition "put the cart before the horse in making an assumption, or, at any rate, creating a myth, of a mass of well-organized gay and lesbian organizations ready to take up the fight" (Nell and Shapiro 1999, 8). Further, there was never any real, sustained effort made by the Coalition towards achieving these goals, however unrealistic they may have been. "Core activists" have emphasized "product, to the almost total exclusion of process," Nell and Shapiro conclude (1999, 2). While there is little doubt that the Coalition has been committed to the importance of the idea of building a movement and developing a grassroots leadership, this avenue of work was simply deprioritized.

) Legislative and legal work was allowed to take precedence over the organizational and community-based development work at the NCGLE's every turn. This is not for lack of opportunities to engage with the community. For instance, the Coalition planned to use the launching of their "Recognize our Relationships" campaign (a campaign for same-sex marriage rights) as a tool of community mobilization. They

convinced the Pride committee to accept "Recognize our Relationships" as the theme for the 1998 Pride Parade, they held workshops on the issue of same-sex marriage for affiliate organizations in the provinces of Gauteng and KwaZulu/Natal, a committee was launched that did a number of radio interviews, 8000 petitions were collected between the end of 1997 and the end of 1998, etc. After all this effort, the campaign came to an abrupt halt in early 1999. The Coalition cites the prolonged illness of the key staff member in charge of this initiative as the reason for its cessation. But Nell and Shapiro state that they believe that if the focus of this campaign had been on some form of legal or legislative change, "the energy and the will would have been found to take the process forward" (1999, 19).

I stated at the outset of this chapter that since the NCGLE articulated its struggle as one that must be advanced as a necessarily coalitional one, South African gay and lesbian politics and organizing in the post-apartheid era offers a useful test case for the strategy of working across difference and in coalition that has become such a popular proposition in Euroamerican queer theorizing of late. But, as it turns out, the NCGLE, despite its roots in a liberation struggle and rhetorical commitment to the importance of working across difference to build a strong and representative gay and lesbian movement that would work for the achievement of broadly-conceived social equity, did not actually make any significant material efforts toward accomplishing these aims. Other organizations did, however. Among these, Johannesburg Pride stands out as one that has made a very serious effort to bridge intra-community divisions along race, class and gender lines. So it will serve as my second case. But as we will see, Pride's story is one that cannot be understood without being prefaced by my first case (or perhaps more

accurately, non-case), the NCGLE. For the NCGLE “has played a very important role...It changed the legal lay of the land within which gays and lesbians would move and take up other challenges” (former director of the NCGLE, interview, July 2003).

History and the space between apartheid and its post

Gramsci:

“A crisis occurs, sometimes lasting for decades. This exceptional duration means that incurable structural contradictions have revealed themselves, and that, despite this, the political forces which are struggling to conserve and defend the existing structure itself are making every effort to overcome them. These incessant and persistent efforts...form the ‘terrain of the conjunctural’, and it is upon this terrain that the forces of the opposition organize” (1971, 178).

Hart:

“[I]nstead of simply reading patterns of path-dependent development off historical legacies, one must focus on ongoing practices, processes and struggles. The past, in this view, is not simply a historical explanation, but a terrain of struggle” (2002b, 817).

Antonio Gramsci’s conceptualization of the “terrain of the conjunctural” is of much use in the context of South Africa. We can locate the “crisis” of Afrikaner nationalism at the point in time in which it embarked on its particular bizarre and violent scheme of social engineering. And we can think of the transition from apartheid as the point at which that crisis could no longer be managed. As the state began to crack under pressure, the “forces of the opposition” – ie. civil society – mobilized to pry its fissures wide open and create a new political dispensation. But how and why might we also read the transition to post-apartheid as “conjunctural terrain”?

We might do so because in that period power relations were re-ordered and new political actors became official stakeholders in "the system". They moved from the outside in, and in that movement, at least in the case of the NCGLE, is the possibility that they initiated their own crises and opened up new conjunctural terrains. It is in this light that I think we ought to read the way in which the NCGLE brought gays and lesbians into the new South Africa. There is more at stake in its anti-democratic, elitist, unrepresentative lobbying effort than the simple inclusion of the phrase "sexual orientation" in the new constitution. The NCGLE's history is not simply a legacy to be overcome, nor does it "explain" the failure of the gay and lesbian movement – ie. I am not arguing that the NCGLE chose the "wrong" strategy. Rather, as will become evident in what follows, the NCGLE disciplined itself into taking a conservative approach to political change and thus simultaneously consolidated the gay and lesbian struggle and allowed it to slip. It changed the terrain of struggle in ways that are still being negotiated. As such, just as Gramsci tells us we would be wise to pay attention to the crises that the state negotiates, we must also consider the crises with which civil society constantly deals. In other words, we should re-evaluate our faith in the capability of civil society to act instrumentally on its own behalf.

Envisioning Pride and the "poor, black gay or lesbian"

It is all very well that being gay is now legalized and discrimination against gay people now officially an offence. This however is only the beginning. Should people fail to put this into practice by building relationships to change people's perceptions, and actually promote being gay, this legislation will remain worthless (my emphasis).

-Mike Joubert

Johannesburg's, and South Africa's, first Gay and Lesbian Pride March took place in October 1990. Organized by the township-based gay and lesbian organization GLOW, it was an overtly militant display of solidarity with the liberation struggle as well as a plea for the acceptance of homosexuals in South African society. In a move that was somewhat counterintuitive to the spirit of openness that characterized the day, organizers provided masks made out of paper bags for would-be marchers. Of the 800 participants, some chose to wear them while many others did not. Though the theme for that year's march was "Unity in the Community", divisions within the community were starkly evident with many white gay and lesbian organizations declining to participate because they did not wish to identify themselves with the liberation struggle.

Since 1990, a Pride march/ parade has been held in the streets of Johannesburg every year.¹¹ As have Pride events everywhere, it has had to balance schisms within the community along the lines of race, class and gender as well as tensions between community and commercial interests. In what follows, I present a narrative of the ways in which it has variously attempted to negotiate these different demands over the years. In particular, I argue that the figure of the "poor, black gay or lesbian" that the NCGLE invoked in its (rhetorical) effort to make the rights gains it fought for relevant to the lives of everyday people has also been invoked by various Pride committees in a similar effort to make the event relevant to the community – and also to capital. The way in which the tension between these different audiences has been variously negotiated provides useful

¹¹ The Association of Bisexuals Gays and Lesbians (ABIGALE), a Cape Town-based and predominantly "black" and "coloured" organization that is now defunct, organized the first Pride march in that city in 1993. It has not been an annual event, however. A few more parades were held in various years in the 1990s. Some momentum seems to have gathered since the turn of the century, though, with Pride events being held in every year from 2001 through 2004.

insight into how the NCGLE and the process of democratic transition that it was a part of has changed the landscape for gay and lesbian political and economic struggles.¹²

In 1991, only its second year, there were already signs that the Pride event was being pulled away from strictly political objectives and into the more overtly commercial realm. At the time, Mark Gevisser warned that, "some were made profoundly uncomfortable by the militancy of last year's march and its clear alliance with the larger freedom struggle, and are trying to make this year's one into a large, happy apolitical celebration" (1991, 5). But, while still organized by the staunchly political GLOW, with much support from the NCGLE, the march retained its emphasis on protest for the next few years. Attendance remained small at around 1000 participants per annum, political speeches, placard waving and chanting were the main activities, and pageantry was kept to a minimum.¹³

Things began to change with the 1994 event, however. GLOW and the NCGLE continued their involvement with Pride, but they were no longer its prime organizers. A group of white gay businessmen¹⁴ spearheaded the event that year and took it in new directions. The chairman of this group made the following statement during a speech to a gathering of gay businesspeople: "The feeling this year was that the emphasis of the march should change to being one of a more carnival atmosphere as opposed to being one

¹² In this history of Johannesburg Pride, my focus is limited to the ways and means by which the organization has positioned itself in relation to community and capital and how the figure of the "poor, black gay or lesbian" has been central to this negotiation. For a brief analysis of the early years of the Pride parade's and its role in gay and lesbian organizing in South Africa, see: Mark Gevisser and Graeme Reid (1995).

¹³ To retain the spirit of protest, the organizers rather controversially discouraged the participation of "drag queens" in the march. The flamboyance of drag identities was considered counter to the respectable image of gay and lesbians as "comrades in the struggle" that the organizers sought to create.

¹⁴ The fact that the committee that took Johannesburg Pride in this commercial direction happened to be a group of gay white affluent males should not be read as an indictment against this group or as an equation of conservatism with gay white males of the type that I write against in chapter two. As shall be seen later in this chapter, this group did eventually diversify its composition and many stayed on and worked towards a new vision for Pride that was developed from 1998 through 2001.

of a militant stance. Indeed we even changed the name from 'march' to 'parade'." The organizers felt that this change in atmosphere from one of protest to one of celebration was warranted by the inclusion of "sexual orientation" in the interim constitution's Equality Clause. Floats sponsored by gay and lesbian businesses were invited to participate, after parties at gay commercial venues were held for the first time and attendance at the event ballooned to somewhere in the range of 8 – 10 000 participants.

Journalist Mark Gevisser commented on this new Pride "parade" as follows:

Unlike in past years, black participation in the event was minimal. That there are large and active networks of black gays and lesbians is a fact, not a fantasy concocted by gay activists... So why so few black people at the parade? For the first time, it was not a struggle march for human rights organised by activists; rather, it was a celebratory parade heavily supported by gay commercial interests... The organisers will point out that Glow – the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand, which is the only gay group in the [Johannesburg area] with significant black membership – was part of the organising team. But without a significant injection of skills and resources, Glow will be unable to realize its own organizing potential (1994, 11).

Once the constitution was ratified in 1996, the Pride organizing committee became an independent entity without substantial ties to GLOW or the NCGLE (though it officially remained an affiliate of the Coalition). It was encouraged by both of these organizations to address its racial and gender composition such that it would be more representative of the broader gay and lesbian community but it did not do so. And not only did it intensify the trend towards commercialization and away from the goal of community development that it had begun in 1994. While continuing to encourage gay and lesbian-owned commercial entities to invest in the event, it also sought out new stakeholders from within government and "mainstream" corporate South Africa. With this search for new sources of financial support, Pride in Johannesburg also took on a

new and distinctly international flavour. As highlighted in the following excerpt from a press release issued by the Gay and Lesbian Pride Committee on 20 September 1996, it did so by tapping into the rhetoric of the potential of pink tourism:

Johannesburg's parade has the potential to stimulate an influx of gay and lesbian tourists. One third of all tourists visiting Australia do so at the time of the Sydney Mardi Gras. Increased tourism leads to increased economic growth and job creation. This could be a constructive contribution to South African society from the gay and lesbian community, one way of expressing our appreciation for the inclusion of sexual orientation in the equality clause of the new constitution.

Though it took this global turn, the parade of course remained embroiled in distinctly local matters. It was still a local political event. But its political nature had changed. Rather than using the Gay and Lesbian Pride parade as a platform from which to voice the social grievances of everyday gays and lesbians or to publicize the ongoing legislative battles of the NCGLE, the event was positioned as one in which a grateful gay and lesbian community would give back to the society that had presumably satisfied its demands for justice. It was an event that had been ultimately enabled by the granting of rights to gays and lesbians by the new South African state.

It was also still a community event. Though its primary goal was the courting of capital and the creation of a world-class tourism event, the product it was selling was the community itself. In this respect, a parallel with the dynamics of Cape Town's Mother City Queer Project (the other South African version of a Sydney-Mardi-Gras-in-the-making that I discuss in chapter three) is obvious. If it were to compete on an international scale it would have to draw pink tourists away from other established queer events. To do so, a distinctly South African stamp needed to be imprinted on

Johannesburg Pride. South Africa's unique constitution was one way in which this could be accomplished.

Another was its Africanization – at least in name. In 1996, the theme of “African Pride Beyond Boundaries” was chosen as an adaptation of the theme “Pride Beyond Boundaries” that had been chosen by the international pride organizing body that year. And in 1997, “African Pride” was the theme. Despite these rhetorical shifts, however, no discernible efforts to “Africanize” pride – for example, by transforming the composition of its white, male organizing committee or by engaging in outreach activities in townships to encourage black South Africans to attend the event and diversify what was becoming an increasingly disproportionate white crowd with every passing year – were taken.

Nonetheless, a final mode of local adaptation served to entrench the community, and particularly its black members, at the heart of the event. Having established that Johannesburg Pride was an event that gave the gay and lesbian community a way in which to give back to South Africa, a reason why government and corporate sectors should give to Johannesburg Pride was lacking. The figure of the “poor, black gay or lesbian” provided it. As a letter from the Pride 1996 chairman to potential sponsors of the event states:

It is our sincere conviction that sponsorship of this event by your organization will be commercially beneficial, as well as visibly demonstrating your commitment to the emerging social and cultural institutions of post-apartheid South Africa. Our new constitution is an important stepping stone. But the majority of our community is made up of poor, black gays and lesbians who still experience the stigma of being gay in their daily lives. By being a part of Pride, your organization will play a key role in helping to bring about acceptance for gays and lesbians throughout South Africa.

The shift away from any significant form of community development in these years was by no means uncontested. In the mainstream media, there surfaced “rumblings of discontent” from GLOW members who were unhappy with the sidelining of the black gays and lesbians who had initiated Pride events in 1990 (Blignaut 1997). And numerous calls to get back to a more overtly politicized Pride were published in gay and lesbian papers.¹⁵ For instance, one commentator remarked with incredulity that many attendees at the 1997 parade “hadn’t even heard of Dullah Omar [an MP who tried to block the NCGLE’s effort to have sodomy decriminalized].” He then writes, “‘We are angry,’ Kevn Botha thundered at a not especially attentive audience, genially sipping Savannahs in the sun” (Trenrove Jones 1997, 15). In another example, Kevan Botha implores the gays and lesbians not to “sell out our future” in an article about the growing commercialization of Pride. He writes:

How many Rosebank¹⁶ *moffies* are aware of the hardships of coming out in a squatter camp, where overcrowding and lack of privacy inhibits the conduct of intimate relationships? How many Rosebank *moffies* have visited a township or a gay shebeen in Soweto? How many can say truthfully that they understand the inequality which pervades our society? (1996a, 39; emphasis in original).

In 1998, Pride would change directions once again. And this time, it set out on a course that would see it attempt to merge community and capital in different and potentially radical ways. The instigator for the change was the addition to the organizing committee of a new co-chair; still a white member of the community, but this time a woman, and one with very different notions of what Johannesburg Pride should

¹⁵ Before proceeding with this discussion on the fate of attempts to “politicize” Pride, a note of clarification is necessary. A distinction between queering and identity-based politics has been well-made within queer and gay and lesbian studies. And it should be stated that these efforts to politicize Johannesburg Pride were articulated as part of a more inclusive identity-based politics.

¹⁶ Rosebank is an affluent, predominantly white suburb of Johannesburg.

accomplish. As a member of the previous committee told me, "we were keen to include women in the organizing committee. We needed to create an event that a broader spectrum of the community would buy into" (interview, June 2003). And as this new co-chair tells it:

When I started with Pride, there were eight very wealthy white boys. The environment was disabling. You couldn't talk there. You felt like, I don't have a degree, I can't talk. Or, I don't have contacts, I can't talk. I don't have money. So when we started to change it, we literally were like, we're gonna live South Africa's constitution. It doesn't matter where you come from, it doesn't matter what colour you are.

The new vision for Pride was not a complete overhaul. As demonstrated by the following excerpt from the request for funding sent out by the 1998 Pride Committee, its commercial aspirations remained intact:

The Pride Parade has been an economic and political success story for most of the cities where there is support and excitement. In fact, in Sydney, Australia, the Pride Parade is the single biggest tourist attraction of the year... There were 5200 visitors from overseas and 7300 from other Australian states, each of whom spent in excess of the average daily amount for other tourist events.

Also consistent with the previous committee's logic was its insistence that Pride would greatly benefit the "poor and black" members of the gay and lesbian community. As the new co-chair stated:

Socially we are far behind many other countries... Take, for instance, the majority of black lesbians, who are in the lowest social bracket. They face daily harassment, have little access to justice, little knowledge of their legal protection and often end up homeless without their family support structure because they are told they are the "devil's spawn" (quoted in Daniels, 1998).

Pride, it was argued by the committee, was in a unique position to educate the public about gay and lesbian issues and thus to improve the social landscape in which these still downtrodden members of the community lived.

Despite these similarities, there was one significant difference between the rhetoric of the previous committee and that of the new one. The latter took significant steps to try to realize its vision of Pride as a tool for community development.

The first step this new committee took was to begin a process of transforming the committee's composition. It expanded the committee to thirty members. Of these thirty, only five had been on previous Pride committees and only two had been working on Pride for longer than a couple of years. One third of the 1998 committee was female and five were not white. The committee was the first to admit that it was not as racially representative as they would have wished. But, since this was the first year of a transformation process that they intended to continue for years to come, they thought they were off to a good start.¹⁷

Second, the 1998 committee made outreach activities a high priority. With support from the NCGLE, in terms of both financial and staff resources, they set up the Community Outreach Project. Through this project, the Pride committee conducted workshops for gays and lesbians in numerous townships in the Johannesburg area, helped interested individuals set up mini "Pride committees" through which they could raise funds to pay for transport into town and thus participate in Pride events, and even went so far as to go to the homes of individuals who the outreach project coordinator had heard might be homosexual so that they could be put in touch with networks of gays or lesbians in their area and thus have some source of social support. In the Pride committee's 1998 report, it declares this project an unmitigated success and attributes it with the attendance of "3000 Black, Coloured and Asian people" at that year's Pride events.

¹⁷ Indeed, they did manage to continue this process of transformation. By 2001, only one of the core organizers was white. In addition, a large volunteer base of black gays and lesbians were instrumental in putting the event together that year.

Finally, this new committee sought to make their vision a lasting one. While previous Pride marches/ parades were organized with little continuity from one year to the next, save for perhaps the participation of some of the same organizers in consecutive years, the 1998 committee attempted to institutionalize its vision through the adoption of a "Pride Charter." In line with the main tenet of this charter – which was the principle of non-discrimination towards LGBT people "on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, colour, national origin, financial standing, and disabilities" – it was declared that Pride would: ensure safe and appropriate space for committee member meetings and other activities; regularly disseminate strong public statements that demonstrated the Committee's commitment to ending discrimination and the value that it placed on diversity; ensure that all social activities organized as Pride events would be inclusive of all sexual and gender orientations and identities; establish an independent advisory committee; implement monitoring processes to ensure transparency; ensure that diversity within the LGBT community was recognized and valued. Above all, it was affirmed that Pride would remain a non-profit organization. Outreach activities would be its main undertaking and any profit generated from the running of Pride events would be channeled into a Pride Trust. That fund would be used to support the activities of township-based gay and lesbian groups.

Though a non-profit organization, the capital required to run Pride's events and outreach activities and provide support for community organizations had to come from somewhere, however. And in this committee's vision, divisions within the gay and lesbian community itself provided the answer. As one former committee member told me:

You should be able to get a lot of money through sponsorship for pride. You've got the wealthy moffies who want an upmarket well-run event and you've got the sponsors who want to tap into that market. So you play into that. You use Pride as a strategic vehicle that gets all the sponsorship but then doesn't just use it for financial gain for a few people. You take the money and give Pride the platform that it needed. I mean, in South Africa, you've got dykes being raped in townships, left right and centre (interview, August 2003).

As the press release issued by the 1998 committee to unveil Pride's new logo, brand identity, and ad campaign (all of which had been generated through work donated by a major local advertising agency and went on to win awards in highly-regarded international advertising award competitions) stated: "It may look straight, but our new identity is completely queer." In the words of another member of the 1998 committee:

Pride is political in its pure nature. It's political being a women. Everything is political. I believe that. We tried to take the overt politics out of it but have an event that achieved the objectives that a political document would but in a way that's tangible... Come to a party, live the experience. Leave unaware of the fact that you've lived a political experience. But you had fun (interview, July 2003).

This vision would guide Pride's organization through 2001. Outreach continued to be prioritized and the dual goals of giving to the community while striving to put on a world-class gay and lesbian event that would attract sponsorship and international tourists alike persisted. Yet, this concept never got off the ground. Though the Pride Charter was adopted in 1998 and the achievement of its goals worked towards by different organizing committees up until and including 2001, the vision faded thereafter for two interconnected reasons. First, the event was an unmitigated financial failure. And second, influential sections of the community revolted.

In 2001, Pride broke even. That was its best year in financial terms since the adoption of the new vision. So, what happened to all the sponsorship money that should

have been available to an event that could help companies tap into the purportedly lucrative pink niche market? As many respondents told me, they simply could not get corporate South Africa to affiliate themselves with Pride. Though it is officially illegal to discriminate against gays in lesbians, there is still much social opprobrium in the post-apartheid era. And committee members found that most corporations, with the exception of certain "lifestyle" oriented brands such as alcohol and energy drinks, did not want to risk alienating their core heterosexual consumer base by appearing to promote homosexuality. Funding was secured on a yearly basis from South Africa Tourism and Gauteng Tourism (the national and provincial tourism boards respectively) but it was insufficient. Beyond not securing sufficient levels of funding from corporate and government sources, Pride also saw a decline in the level of funding proffered by what had been a previously strong source of support, that of community businesses and individuals. This leads to the second reason for this revamped Pride's failure.

In the view of one committee member who had played an active role in altering Pride's reason for being, difficulties arose "because the boys [the businessmen who had previously run Pride] had lots of access to funding sources but wouldn't hand over any of their contacts." Speculating on why this was so, this same informant continued, "People carry baggage. You've got all these issues around transformation¹⁸ coming up in the Pride committee. All the stereotypes coming out...It was just hard." A slightly different take on Pride's financial difficulties is evident in the following statement made by a committee member who had been on both the old and new committees: "We really

¹⁸ "Transformation" was not just the term that the Pride committee chose for its attempts to change its leadership's composition. It is a term that is used throughout South Africa to refer to Black Economic Empowerment initiatives, a form of affirmative action instituted in the post-apartheid era with the intention of changing the racial composition of boardrooms, shareholders and upper management groups throughout the country. It remains a hotly debated issue on a national scale.

wanted the committee to be more representative of the community, you know, we didn't want to just be a group of white moffies running Pride. But what Pride was ended up changing so much that many members of the community didn't feel a part of it anymore." Whether or not the "old boys" refused to give up their contacts cannot be confirmed but the second informant's claim that certain sectors of the gay and lesbian community were beginning to feel out of place at Pride is substantiated by a flurry of discussion in the media over the parade's route.

The urban space of Johannesburg has undergone a profound re-ordering in the years since the transition from apartheid began. The Central Business District has simply picked up and moved to the northern, gated and still largely white suburbs over the past fifteen to twenty years. Gay and lesbian history in this city, however, has strong roots in the old CBD. The first gay and lesbian entertainment venues were located there, the first Pride march was held there, the constitutional court was recently built there, when black, gay activist Simon Nkoli died of an AIDS-related illness in 1999 the city named a corner after him there, etc. But as the CBD has moved north, so have the white people who used to live in its residential enclaves.¹⁹ The old downtown is now a low-rent area. And despite "white flight," it has experienced a tremendous influx in its residential population due to in-migration from outlying townships, rural areas of South Africa and neighbouring countries. With the change in the character and make-up of this area, many in the community began to demand that the Pride parade relocate to the northern suburbs of Rosebank or Sandton. Isolated calls for a change to Pride's venue are evident in the

¹⁹ Dwellings in the former CBD's residential neighbourhoods (such as Braamfontein and Hillbrow) were zoned as "white" areas under apartheid. Before apartheid's official end, non-white people began to move into these neighbourhoods and thus illegally made them some of the first integrated in areas in the city. The "bohemian" and anti-apartheid posture that this fact lent these neighbourhoods played a large role in their initial selection for the first Pride march in 1990.

gay and lesbian media as early as 1996. But in the late 1990s, and especially in 2001, these murmurs grew to a roar. One sample of this rhetoric, written by the editor of the *Gay Pages* (a directory of "community businesses" and lifestyle magazine) is as follows:

Complaining about the stench in Hillbrow, one veteran said that he had had enough. He was unhappy with the idea of "from the closet into the back streets." He felt that if we were really out and proud, we should stop hiding in Hillbrow and flaunt it in Rosebank or Melville (van Niekerk, 1999).

And another example, also on the theme of visibility:

On this year's evidence, about 90% of the participants moved through an area that is now 95% Black inhabited. If one of the objects of a Parade is to be 'Out' this route rather compromises this end: most of the participants are extremely unlikely to be seen by anyone they know other than their fellow marchers (Tren Grove Jones 1997, 15).

In response, members of various Pride committees between 1998 and 2001 passionately defended the choice of routing. They insisted on the historical significance of the "town" routing and on the fact that the hundreds of thousands of non-white residents of this neighbourhood were indeed the peers of the majority of the gay and lesbian population. In one particularly heated exchange in the pages of the gay and lesbian newspaper *Exit*, a complainant who calls him/herself an "ex-marcher states that, "Johannesburg is no longer suitable for the Pride, and I hope the Pride Committee next year realizes this...and presents a proper Pride next year, or they can look forward to fewer and fewer "normal gay people" going to Pride." In response, co-organizer of the 2001 Pride committee, Daniel Somerville, sums up his committee's thoughts on the issue eloquently by challenging its underlying racist logic. He states:

As for wanting a better environment, yes, I am sure that all the people who traveled to Pride from Soweto, Mamelodi, Kwa-Thema and other townships...would love to march and live in a better environment free from violence and prejudice and discrimination. If you stand for equality and diversity you should be helping to improve the lives of everyone in

our community not just seeking to entertain once a year, those whose lives are not touched by discrimination and abuse (2001, 2).

Only months after Somerville penned this letter, he and his co-organizer dissolved the Pride organization. Over the years – and particularly since 1998 – various Pride committees had repeatedly pleaded with the community to get involved in and support Pride. But in the end, its downfall was its failure to even achieve quorum at elections for the 2002 Pride committee.

With its Charter thus declared inactive, Pride was opened up for redefinition once again. Two gay businessmen seized the opportunity and have been running it since then, in a very different way. They have registered “Pride Communications” as a for profit company. While they insist that they are still committed to creating a Pride for all facets of the gay and lesbian community, they have abandoned outreach activities entirely. In response to my question regarding whether or not this new Pride provided buses for people from townships to attend Pride events, one co-organizer stated:

No, we just think that we must be able to instill a culture of... not of handouts... We don't want to instill that it's a handout culture. We understand that there are lots and lots of gay people out there who are poor. And there are white poor, there are gay people who are white and black who are poor. But we want a situation where don't just give handouts. We want them to be responsible (interview, July 2003).

But, it is now even more difficult for these “responsible” attendees to get to Pride as it has been moved north, to the suburb of Rosebank. When asked about why the decision to move was made, this same co-organizer stated:

We've exhausted town. We had it there for 13 years... The streets aren't big enough to hold 20 to 25 000²⁰ people. Because you know, one of the worrying things as organizers... is the safety²¹ of people. And

²⁰ No Johannesburg Pride parade has ever come close to reaching this figure of participants. A more reasonable estimation of attendance figures in recent years is probably between 10 to 12 000.

I think town...is not conducive to hold 25 000 people at one particular place or time. We have a responsibility to our major sponsors as well. To give them the exposure, the added value spent on their products, on their company as well, so...Rosebank is more conducive to getting the wider exposure that we really want.

All this is not to say that the "poor, black gay or lesbian" has been forgotten in this most recent new vision for Pride. As did previous committees, these new organizers hope to make the Johannesburg event into the next Sydney Mardi Gras. And to do so, they will have to drum up a significant infusion of capital from corporate and government sectors. On this note, a co-organizer states:

The bottom line is that corporate South Africa needs to increase their turnover. To do that they need to have a great public image, just look at the King report.²² Our brand is about social responsibility. Involvement with it says I'm doing something about diversity and I'm also endorsing our constitution...Corporations can help Pride to uplift the community, because, you know, there is still a lot of violence and discrimination that people face, especially in the black community. And gay people can be comfortable in that corporation due to its contribution (interview, July 2003).

This most recent new vision for Pride has thus far also failed to yield its organizers' intended results. It has posted financial losses every year from 2002 to 2004 and attendance has come nowhere close to meeting the organizers' targets. After the 2004 parade, one organizer posted a public letter on the Pride website that berates lesbian and gay "community" businesses for their "selfish" behaviour at "a time when corporate social responsibility is a requirement." According to him, many businesses profited from increased revenues during Pride events, yet they neither contributed any funds to the

²¹ Safety is indeed a legitimate concern. The downtown core has a notoriously high incidence of violent crime. Previous committees did not hide this fact. Rather, they sought to work with police and security forces to ensure that the event was secure.

²² The King Report was published in South Africa in 2002 and outlines guidelines for corporate governance. It advocates that corporations move away from the single bottom line (ie. profit for shareholders) to a triple bottom line that includes the environmental and social aspects of a company's activities as well as the economic.

running of Pride nor have they “re-invested” any money “back into the community.” He concludes: “So how successful was this year’s PRIDE? I was committed to the ideals of PRIDE, but on a personal level I felt destroyed by it...Pride can only be successful by the community who makes it” (Bath 2004). Thus, the failure of Pride is linked to the same factor that the NCGLE’s organizers credited with its failure, apathy within the community.

We might also explain Pride’s failure in a way that resonates with the analysis of Cape Town’s Mother City Queer Project that I set out in Chapter three. As a former Pride organizer told me, “One can’t escape the conclusion that...if you think [Pride’s] going to be commercially successful then it means people have to buy into it. Black people are the majority in South Africa and so it makes sense to make us feel okay.” Moving the parade to the northern suburbs and failing to provide transport from townships may both go a long way to ensuring that this end is not accomplished.

Disciplining radical democracy

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe:

“Our thesis is that it is only from the moment when the democratic discourse becomes available to articulate the different forms of resistance to subordination that the conditions will exist to make possible the struggle against different types of inequality” (1985, 154).

Stuart Hall:

“[In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*] there is no reason why anything is or isn’t potentially articulable with anything else. The critique of reductionism has apparently resulted in the notion of society as a totally open discursive field” (1996, 146).

Kirstie McClure:

“It may be more than merely possible to think both “governmentality” and “the democratic revolution.” It may be unavoidable” (1995, 163).

In their seminal work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe imagine the world through a post-marxist lens. They declare that the social itself has no essence and, as such, they reject "classism" – ie. the notion that the working class is "the" agent of fundamental social change. In the indeterminate reality that they give voice to, faith is placed instead on plurality, on the notion that "the transformation of the elements [defined as "any difference that is not discursively articulated] into moments [defined as the "differential positions" that are articulated within a discourse] is never complete" (1985, 107).

As indicated in the quote from Stuart Hall above, the extremely unstable social field that Laclau and Mouffe present has been the subject of much critique. As Hart puts it: "The fundamental problem is their failure to distinguish historical from abstract determinism and their rejection of determinism *tout court* ... on the grounds that it perpetuates economism" (2002a, 31). In Wendy Brown's analysis, Laclau and Mouffe's fear of economism renders their "radical democracy" vulnerable to the charge of "idealism" since it presumes that social and political forms are relatively autonomous from economic ones and that they "can be tinkered with independently of developments in the forces of capitalism" (1995, 12).

Laclau and Mouffe's political solutions to problems within a social field that is obviously inflected by much more than the political is undoubtedly a severe shortcoming in their work. Nonetheless, while they fail to adequately theorize the constraints on the various "articulations" of identity that they expose, many of their critics have welcomed their point that a non-essentialist materialism is called

for in this age of diverse social movements. But accepting the notion that there is no privileged agent of social change has proven easier than accepting the notion that there are no privileged spaces from which social change is likely to stem.

Here, I want to explore the relevance of this tendency to the problematic of building a gay and lesbian movement in South Africa as I have set it out above.

In their “unfixed” sociality, it is rather odd that Laclau and Mouffe place a great deal of emphasis on the efficacy of rights as a tool of social justice. Miranda Joseph (2002a) problematizes this element of their argument on the basis that its reliance on a logic of “equivalence” or “analogy” necessarily reaffirms the “proliferation of discrete positive identities” (xxviii). Further, Wendy Brown, while not dismissing rights out of hand, behooves us “to not simply proliferate rights but to explore the historically and culturally specific ground of the demand for them” (1995, 12). Both of these authors make compelling cases against the straightforward hailing of rights as the way towards equity. And where they take these arguments is worth exploring.

The purpose of Joseph’s intervention is to wear away the self-evidence of “community.” She hopes to “open a space for creative thinking about the constitution of collective action, where the term *community* would operate so effectively to shut down such thought” (vii). In short, she sets out the ways in which struggles in the name of certain communities – including gay and lesbian ones – often preclude the freedom of other communities due to their complicity with capital. In a highly nuanced analysis to which I cannot do justice here, she concludes that community is capital’s supplement. In other words, she finds that

community is deployed to shore up and facilitate the flow of capital. But at the same time as community supports capitalism, this relationship of supplementarity also entails the potential to displace it. And it is in this proposition that she finds hope. For, as she states: "My analysis of how community is produced and consumed, rather than what community ought to be, should make it possible to build movements based on the connections we do have, rather than yearning for lost or impossible utopias" (xxx). She recognizes that, as Laclau and Mouffe tell us, "there can only be an ongoingly dynamic array of contingent answers" to be determined in the context of particular political struggles. Nonetheless, she suggests that as we formulate these responses, we need a "politics of scale and space that refigure our understandings of *here*, of who is here with us" (174; emphasis in original). She highlights, for instance, gay consumers in the US and Mexican maquiladora workers as "sites of value" that should not be presumed to be discontinuous.

Brown, meanwhile, shows us the ways in which "freedom" has too often been appropriated in liberal regimes for the "most cynical and unemancipatory political ends." Speaking about the limitations of rights, she argues that "ideals of freedom ordinarily emerge to vanquish their imagined immediate enemies, but in this move they frequently recycle and reinstate rather than transform the terms of domination that generated them" (1995, 7). As such, she argues that the attainment of rights often results in loss, the loss of the pursuit of political freedom. As does Joseph, she insists that this situation can be reversed. She finds hope in a theoretical return to the problem of domination within capitalism

alongside analyses of the problem of domination in domestic state power. She insists that rights can be deployed differently since their political value is contingent upon historical conditions rather than ontologically determined.

The merging of capitalist and identarian critiques that both Joseph and Brown urge us to undertake is a goal that must be taken seriously. Yet, the stories of the NCGLE/ Equality Project and Pride in South Africa offer a caution that we may not be able to instrumentally accomplish it. Yes, it is true that the NCGLE, despite its pronouncements, never really tried to work towards economic redistribution either within or beyond the community. It never acted on its capitalist critique. But Pride did. And its efforts were dismally unsuccessful.

Joseph wants us to work across communities to combat capital. In line with this goal, Pride tried to get support for its vision of class politics from all sectors of the gay and lesbian community. I am not saying that it launched a very well thought through challenge to capital as broadly construed. It did after all want to insert itself into South Africa's neoliberal present via problematically narrating itself as a pink market waiting to be tapped. But it did want to change the socioeconomic situation of those within the community whose identities crossed raced and gendered lines in such ways as to economically disadvantage them. That it did not manage to effectuate this change, I think, can be traced back to the attainment of rights.

By this, I do not mean that the mere attainment of rights in and of themselves has created the intra-community schisms that we can credit with Pride's downfall as a force for socioeconomic change. I also do not mean that

Laclau and Mouffe were right about rights. They were not. Rights in and of themselves cannot do anything. Their product-effects, however, can.

As I have already mentioned, it was highly likely that the phrase "sexual orientation" would have been retained in the new South Africa's constitution whether or not the NCGLE launched its lobbying effort. But it did launch its lobbying effort. And the way in which it performed rights in that campaign has been iterated and reiterated in countless spaces within gay and lesbian South Africa. I am not arguing that it is responsible for the class, race, and gender schisms within the community. Rather, I wish to take note of the way it has performed them and how, by using laws as "tactics" (in a Foucauldian sense, see Foucault 1991) they thus disciplined a movement.

I argue that the NCGLE and Pride have not been able to shake off the yoke of that binary that divides the community into the haves and have-nots because each organization has produced it. In other words, neither organization could make their coalitional, cross-class strategies work because they themselves created the "black, poor gay or lesbian". This figure did not simply exist to be discovered by a movement. It came into being through it. There are thus no innocents with whom to ally.

As Marx has stated, "political revolution is a revolution of civil society" (1978, 44). Not a revolution *for* civil society (though it should ideally be this also), but a revolution *of* civil society. The achievement of rights for gays and lesbians has changed the political terrain. Not on their own, but through the ways in which they were fought for and the ways in which they continue to be rhetorically and

materially deployed in the production of post-apartheid South African gay and lesbian community.

So, we have to come back to Laclau and Mouffe, in revised form. While, of course, the realm of the political cannot be privileged, it also cannot be abandoned while we tinker with the economic. The latter cannot be our privileged space of intervention because it is shot through by its other. It is here that I find hope. For as rights are imbued with a political character, and political character is indeterminately articulated (as Laclau and Mouffe tell us), then the articulation of the subject of rights cannot be captured or contained. So the end of the grand visions of the NCGLE and Pride does not necessarily mean the end of the fight for socioeconomic justice for gay and lesbian South Africans and their countrypeople. But we have to look elsewhere if we hope to find it.

Beyond the sanctity of culture

In a society where there's discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, I do have something in common with the Afrikaans gay man from Pretoria and the lesbian from Katlehog. But in a society with no discrimination, we have little in common.

-Mark Gevisser (*Sunday Times*, 2001)

In the report it delivered to the final conference of the National Coalition of Gay and Lesbian Equality, GLO-P (Gays and Lesbians of Pretoria) declared the "state of the South African gay and lesbian community" to be a dire one because "the majority of this 'community' is either hidden or just interested 'in having a good time'" (1999). As demonstrated above, attempts to bridge this perceived gap so that a unified community might move the gay and lesbian struggle forward in South Africa have fallen flat. Indeed, almost without fail, the gay and lesbian activists with whom I spoke volunteered the view that there was no gay and lesbian movement in these post-apartheid times.

But, while admitting that gay and lesbian organizations have not successfully managed to channel the resources of rich, white, apathetic community members into the struggle so that the needs of the now very visible (at least rhetorically) poor, black gays and lesbians could be met, many informants remained optimistic. When I asked one former Pride organizing committee member what he thought of the direction that the event had taken since 2002, he stated:

I don't know. I'll go, I'll have a drink, I'll have a party but it doesn't move me. I certainly won't get involved and support it in a practical way...But I think that what Behind the Mask²³ can do is rather than mobilizing people to go to that pride, we can say, okay, what kind of pride do you want to have...Should it be a cultural thing or parties elsewhere or all kinds of gatherings?

In response to the same question, another former Pride organizer answered in a similar vein as follows:

I think people will do their own thing... You can either pour negative energy into fighting people into accepting that everyone must be catered for. Or everybody can do their own thing...I think it could potentially be far more powerful.

Indeed, there is already much evidence in South Africa of gays and lesbians in townships "doing their own thing." Beyond the predominantly white gay and lesbian club and political lobbying scenes, we might find hope in phenomena such as drag beauty pageants, a network of gay hairstylists, the gay-friendly Metropolitan Community Church, grassroots AIDS organizations, sports teams (such as an all lesbian soccer team of rape survivors and a drag netball team), and of shebeens²⁴ that cater to gays and lesbians. Yet, this range of queer cultural production is conspicuously absent in

²³ Behind the Mask is a Johannesburg-based internet media organization that reports on sexual minority issues in Africa for which this former Pride organizer works. It focuses its work in South Africa on issues of relevance in the townships such as violence against lesbians.

²⁴ Make-shift bars in townships.

discussions of the “state of the movement” in South Africa amongst those who have taken on roles as spokespeople for the gay and lesbian community.

The following two comments, both posted in response to an article titled “Where are SA’s black gays?” that was published on a website catering to black South African gays and lesbians, may shed some light on this reality:

The overemphasis of black culture, almost as if it is “sacred”, needs to come to an end (Bishop, 2003).

I am grown tired of the white media portraying the black community as more homophobic and less tolerant than other communities. I am certain that coming out as an Afrikaner in the vaal is just as challenging as a black man or woman coming out in the townships (Fowlkes, 2003).

As we have seen, the rhetorical production of the “poor, black gay or lesbian” in the townships has played an important role in the strategies of the NCGLE and Pride. But what was at stake in the deployment of this figure went beyond the stated aims of building a movement and making the rights enshrined in South Africa’s landmark constitution matter in the everyday lives of people.

In the narratives deployed by the NCGLE and Pride, the “poor, black gay or lesbian” is trapped by socioeconomics. S/he is also, and interrelatedly, trapped by culture. Thus the argument that homosexuality is “un-African” is rehearsed by not only the adversaries of gay and lesbian liberation, but, in a sense, by its proponents as well. In the views of the NCGLE/ Equality Project and Pride, what holds the “poor, black gay or lesbian” back from leading an empowered, “out” life is indeed poverty. For s/he does not have the means to escape township cultures that are so inimical to homosexuality.

I do not deny that gays and lesbians in townships experience discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation and that this discrimination far too often takes violent

form. But to play into the notion that “black” South African cultures are more hostile to alternative sexualities than are white ones is problematic. So is the implication that the “poor, black gay or lesbian” can only hope to liberate him/herself from this situation through the embrace of, and by embracing, the “gay and lesbian community”. First and foremost, they construct a colonizing logic that can only serve to deepen the intra-community divisions that have marred the building of a gay and lesbian movement. At the same time, they also lead us to look at “black” cultures as *merely* an impediment to the realization of the promise of South Africa’s constitution for all of its gay and lesbian citizens. In this reading, we must declare the South African gay and lesbian movement dead for it does not allow us to see the many black queer cultural productions that work within the changed terrain of politics that the official gay and lesbian struggle of the post-apartheid era has wrought.

Post-colonializing the “merely cultural”

Donna Haraway:

“I would like to insist on the embodied nature of all vision, and so reclaim the sensory system that has been used to signify a leap out of the marked body and into a conquering gaze from nowhere” (1991, 188).

Mahmood Mamdani:

“Is our world really divided in two, so that one part makes culture and the other is a prisoner of culture? Are there really two meanings of culture? Does culture stand for creativity, for what being human is all about, in one part of the world? But in the other part of the world it stands for habit, for some kind of instinctive activity, whose rules are inscribed in early founding texts, usually religious, and museumized in early artifacts” (2002)?

With the production of the “poor, black gay or lesbian”, “black” and “poor” came to operate as euphemisms for “community” in South African gay and lesbian political discourse. As such, this figure offered a way in which the NCGLE/ Equality Project and Pride could make themselves relevant to their intended audience while creating it as a

cohesive group. On this point, my argument comes full circle. It returns to the debates of Butler and Fraser over the way in which distribution and recognition should be reticulated.

In a 1995 letter written by the NCGLE and addressed simply with "Dear Editor", its Executive Committee states: "We are only asking for the simple right to human dignity and to be protected from persecution by unjust laws and individuals". They got this and much more. It is this "much more" that I have sought to make evident here.

Many queer and feminist theorists argue that we need to put class analyses into conversation with gendered and sexed ones. But as Pred and Watts put it, there is a "desperate need to retheorize where class has gone to, and to rethink, and reassert it in nonessentialist ways" (1992, 198). Part of this rethinking, I argue, is to consider the ways in which performances of class – performances enacted not least by our own social movements – require that we not place undue faith on the possibility of instrumentally changing our political and economic strategies.

With the NCGLE's lobbying effort, it both consolidated a place for its gay and lesbian constituency in the new South Africa and played a part in the slippage of a potential gay and lesbian movement. Rather than deriding what we might easily read as the *depoliticization* of the gay and lesbian organizations I have considered in this chapter, I suggest that we explore the new terrain for social action that the legacy of the NCGLE had a hand in creating as part of the transition towards post-apartheid. As a former director of the NCGLE/Equality Project told me, "I think it [the NCGLE] managed to...break through hugely homophobic forces within government...But now it's time to see the next phase" (interview, July 2003). If we conclude that a radical queer politics must entail the adoption of a coalitional approach that gives class analysis pride of place within gay and lesbian

organizations, we must read the future for queer activism in South Africa as a dismal one.

But to do so would, I think, be a mistake.

We might more productively consider the *re*politicizations of gay and lesbian South Africa. Sarah Nuttall has described South Africa as “a certain kind of ‘postracist’ society.”

She is not saying that it is not still residually racist. Rather, South Africa:

is a society in which in certain fundamental and irreversible ways, public space and political power have been surrendered by white people. Thus the realms of property and the private become the only places that bodies can be separated/ segregated” (2004, 27).

We can read the persistent racialized, classed and gendered schisms within South African gay and lesbian culture and politics as an example of this new order at work. Here, we are seeing the “increasing public withdrawal and disengagement from direct political participation” that Nuttall outlines (2004, 30). While the NCGLE’s lobbying effort wrought a public and enduring pronouncement that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation will not be tolerated in South Africa, it has found that the private and privatized sphere of gay and lesbian life – that sphere in which both the everyday lives of the “poor, black gay and lesbian” and pink market initiatives take place – is beyond its reach.

This situation does not bode well for the suggestion that our organizations must work coalitionally. For, as one South African gay and lesbian activist bemoaned, “I think there are facades of movements all over the place. But just show me one real movement in this country and I’ll be surprised” (interview, June 2003). But, as the political terrain has changed, looking elsewhere for significant sites of queer politics might yield important insights. As I have suggested above, the proliferation of queer cultural production in townships offers a wealth of new political sites. But in addition to these emerging queer publics, the time may have come to look directly at this problematic private sphere. In these

redefined “segregated” spaces, we might find hope. For instance, we might explore the corporate sector as one such new political site. While Pride’s attempts to “queer the company” by getting them to honour their commitment to social responsibility have failed, maybe others will not.²⁵ We might also explore the possibility that workplace cultures are changing as compliance with the constitution is enforced. And as workplace practices change, perhaps business practices will too. I do not know what such explorations will yield. However, we cannot but embark on them

²⁵ In one example, two gay male entrepreneurs have set up a company that acts as a consultant for financial services companies in South Africa. They provide staff training courses on how to best serve the needs of queer clients. But their vision is that their contribution to business practice will not stop there. They want to play a part in instilling a culture of social responsibility in their business partners, a culture that could increase these companies’ commitments not only to sexual diversity but to social welfare and the environment.

Chapter VI

A conclusion and a coda

All politics is, or should be, queer politics.

-Jose Quiroga, *Tropics of Desire*

1. Conclusion: Towards an understanding of the complicit queer

Neil Smith has argued that “when everything moves and everything is political, nothing is” (1996, 75). Queer theorists, it seems, have at long last learned this lesson well. In appraisals of queer’s incorporation and normalization, we are witnessing a decidedly materialist turn within queer theory. It is now clear that we cannot theorize community without theorizing capital, we cannot consider pleasure without considering profit, and we cannot think through queerness without thinking through class. But as we do so, I argue that we would be wise not to forget the genealogy of “queer” by presuming that we are witnessing instances of un-queering.

Queer is not a term that should be pinned down by definition. For it is a doing rather than a thing. As such, Elizabeth Freeman describes queer as “a desire to imagine and represent something different from the social choices at hand” (2002, x). And Joseph Hayes uses queer “less as an adjective to describe sexual acts than as a verb to signify a critical practice in which nonnormative sexualities infiltrate dominant discourse to loosen their political stronghold” (2000, 7). These are descriptions that I do not want to forget as we face the changed terrain of queerness as homosexuality becomes incorporated.

Against the disciplining of radicality

As set out in chapter two, the burgeoning literature within queer studies that addresses the normalization of homosexuality constrains our reading of this phenomenon in certain ways. A potent critique of homomale privilege easily leads to a general derision of “gaywhitemaleness” and the placing of blame for “selling out” at this subject’s feet. A concern with the broader political economy into which queer consumption in the west is tied suggests that it acts as a global force that impacts negatively on local subjects like the third world worker/ third world queer. And an inordinate faith in the power of coalition-building severely curtails our understanding of the spaces of queer politics.

The cultural politics of homosexuality in South Africa might easily be interpreted as supporting these tropes. Place marketing of Cape Town as a pink tourism destination can be read as the homogenization of the city’s queer spaces and the outright exclusion of anyone but the gay white privileged male. The inclusion of gays and lesbians in the new South Africa as a result of their constitutional enfranchisement can be portrayed as merely an instance of strategic essentialism on the part of the gay and lesbian lobby group and opportunism on that of the state. And the rhetoric of coalition building that has been employed by various gay and lesbian organizations in the post-apartheid era can be derided as insincere and thus not a true test of this strategy’s merits.

But I have argued against these readings. Though the rhetoric found in campaigns to market “gay Cape Town” presents it as a smooth space of white, privileged homomale, this image is aspirational. Interviews with “gay Cape Town’s” marketers themselves reveal that this queer space is haunted by those it tacitly seeks to

exclude in ways that prevent a homogenized gayness from being easily mapped onto the city. Further, though the NCGLE advanced its claim for homosexual citizenship in conservative and extremely non-threatening terms, it was embraced because it nonetheless posed a threat. A close reading of the debates surrounding the inclusion of “sexual orientation” in the post-apartheid constitution suggests that South Africa is in fact a queer globalized nation-state because the embrace of homosexuality rendered strange the apartheid past, the desire to remain isolated, and expectations that the reconstructed nation could follow in a despotic postcolonial African tradition. And finally, though the failure of the NCGLE and Johannesburg Pride to merge a politics of distribution with a politics of recognition might be dismissed as an illegitimate attempt at coalition building, it should in fact cause us to be wary of the danger of placing too much instrumental faith in this strategy. Through a reading of the production and invocation of the figure of the “poor, black gay and lesbian” by both Pride and NCGLE, it becomes clear that the political landscape for queer politics in South Africa has changed as a result of the constitutional gains that have been made. The particular ways in which these gains have been performed by these organizations calls attention to the fact that the movement operates through a particular disciplining and highlights the need to pay attention to the genealogy of calls to work coalitionally.

In other words, I have argued against a narrative of incorporation as the loss of queerness, a narrative that has guided queer theoretical approaches to the normalization of homosexuality. Neatly summarized by the editors of *Queers in space*, this logic asserts that queer space must be claimed. They define such “queer appropriation of space” as follows:

The transformation of formerly homophobic and heteronormative social and physical space (whether public, private, or derived from the electronic media) for social relations that support or enhance opportunities for homoerotic and allied communality and eroticism (Ingram, Bouthillette & Retter 1997, 459).

Alternately, they define the “deterritorialization of queer groups” as:

The loss of identifiable queer sites and nodes, and thus substantial portions of a local queerscape, through homophobia, capital, or environmental deterioration (Ingram, Bouthillette & Retter 1997, 459).

As the “good gay” gains a foothold, many argue that queer spaces are indeed eroded. But to make Ingram et al’s definition apply to the state of affairs that we face due to the founding of a new homonormativity, we need to add “tolerance” to their list of causes for the ceding, or perhaps more appropriately abandonment, of queer ground.

Throughout, however, I have argued that normalcy does not automatically trump queerness. In other words, I have asserted that spaces in which there is evidence of the normalization of homosexuality can still be read as queer. As such, I think we ought to recuperate the possibility that normalcy does not preclude radicality. But I make this statement ambivalently and, on this point, clarification is necessary. For, within critical social theory, the notion of “ambivalence” is strongly associated with the work of Homi Bhabha. And I wish to plainly state that I employ it slightly differently.

The psychoanalytic term “ambivalence” is invoked by Bhabha to convey “the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between colonizer and colonized” (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1998, 12). As Alison Blunt and Jane Wills state: “Rather than represent the colonized subject as simply *either* complicit with *or* opposed to the colonizer, Bhabha suggests the *coexistence* of complicity and resistance” (2000, 187). In his formulation in *The Location of Culture*, the complex and

contradictory relationships between the colonizers and colonized render the hegemonic authority of colonial power unstable. This ambivalence, he argues, is radical because it generates the seeds of the destruction of colonial power (Bhabha 1994).

In theorizing this potential progressiveness in ambivalence, Bhabha “locates” culture in the space in-between the colonizer and colonized. Contact in this liminal zone, he argues, is a transformative force. As such, his analysis is clearly driven by a particular geographical imagination. Yet, as Ania Loomba writes:

The split, ambivalent, hybrid colonial subjected project in [Bhabha’s] work is in fact curiously universal and homogeneous – that is to say he¹ could exist anywhere in the colonial world (1998, 178).

Loomba is not alone. Many critics find fault with Bhabha’s theorization of ambivalence on the basis of its lack of attention to historical and geographical² specificity. And their concerns call attention to the dangers of relying on a progressive politics grounded in oppositional reappropriation. In agreement with this critique, I am not advancing an ambivalent approach to normal queer space that insists upon an inherent radicality to queerness that necessarily undermines any possible negative effects of queer’s incorporation. As I stated in chapter two in response to Sothern’s suggestion that the lesbian subject may indeed reappropriate the commodified image that is being sold to her as she gains acceptance in popular culture, he may be right. She may indeed do so. But she is not likely to do so always and everywhere. Neither are other individuals who identify themselves as sexual minorities. Thus, ambivalence cannot be theorized as always and only a threat to hegemonic structures of power. No queer Trojan horse of sorts is likely to save the day.

¹ The citation of only the masculine pronoun in this source is deliberate. It reflects the lack of attention to gender difference in Bhabha’s analysis of the colonial encounter.

² For a critique launched within the discipline of geography, see Mitchell 1997a.

As we try to unravel how queerness and normalcy are intertwined so that we can get at precisely what queer *does* in particular places and times that have previously been read as instances of straightforward appropriation, complicity is something with which we must come to terms. So I want to coax the figure of the complicit queer in our theoretical imaginations. And as I do so, I think we would be wise to recognize that this requirement is not simply thrust upon us as a result of queer's incorporation. For, "when opposition takes the form of a demarcation *from* something, it cannot, it follows, be untouched by that to which it opposes itself. Opposition takes its first steps from a footing of complicity" (Sanders 2002, 9; emphasis in original). To be constitutive of that which opposes us, and which we in turn oppose, is to be in a state of foldedness within it. In such a state, complicity is unavoidable. Thus, the fact that "we *all* collaborate with some enemy" (Pratt & Hanson 1994, 9; emphasis in original) has always been the case.

Lifting the strictures on queer space

At the outset of this work, I stated that it would critically examine the space of queer studies. In these few remaining pages, I want to address not only how I have done that in metaphorical terms but where – literally where – we might go from here as a consequence.

"The last 50 years have seen enormous changes in what sexuality means to us...we find ourselves at a very interesting and significant point. A moment where queer ideas have emerged and problematized existing heteronormative frameworks." Thus state the guest editors of a 2004 special issue of the journal *Sexualities* entitled "Locating sexualities: Politics, identities and space" (Casey, McLaughlin & Richardson, 387). Further, they note that in compiling the contributions that address this new moment of

incorporation for sexual politics, “one particular theme...emerged as a strong site for capturing the interactions between questions of identity and questions of institutions, materiality and power”. They describe that theme simply as “space” (2004, 388).

The way in which they frame their approach to the politics of queer incorporation resonates strongly with my own. In the first place, as a consonance. For it has been my argument here that queer inclusions demand a geographical analysis as they represent fundamental renegotiations of social/ cultural/ economic/ political space. But second, and more significantly, their argument is dissonant with mine. For I have also insisted that while we attend to these empirical phenomena and attempt to decipher their meaning we must simultaneously be mindful of the geographies implicit to the modes of thought we utilize in service to this end. As such, I must insist that we avoid the language of “location” that the guest editors invoke.

There is no question that the boundaries across and through which queerness operates have been renegotiated in many contemporary contexts. The urge to explore the ways in which the relationships between the sexual and the spatial have resultantly been altered is therefore completely understandable. It is also undeniably necessary. However, the characterization of such an exploration as the “location” of homosexuality is a far from benign intellectual strategy.

The successful performance of the task of locating something has two corequisites. First, we must know what that *something* is that we seek. Second, we must find it *somewhere* in particular. In short, the act of location is an act of reification. For if we know the something that we seek, it cannot be known as something else. And if we find it somewhere in particular, it cannot be found somewhere else. To “locate”

homosexuality therefore pins it down in one place or another. It establishes the sexual minority either on the inside or on the outside. To "locate" homosexuality also pins down the meaning of this identity. It finds "good gays" on the inside and "bad queers" on the outside. In such a situation, there is no option but to retreat. Attention must be turned to the prospect of creating queer spaces "beyond the hegemonic" (Alexander 1997, 100). But as I have argued throughout, there is no such place.³

It must be noted here that I am not suggesting that attention to non-mainstream queer spaces is unimportant. Queer theorists have long been considering the ways in which queer lives and cultures cast as deviant by the mainstream often offer potent critiques of dominant society and politics from their position on the margins (for recent examples of such work, see: Cvetkovich 2003; Halberstam 2005; Munoz 1999; Quiroga 2000; Sugg 2003). Analyses along these lines will undoubtedly continue to be important contributions. But while queer theory renders the strange familiar, it should also render the familiar strange. It should also make evident the oddities of normalcy.

As I have argued, in South Africa, the new, normal state is in fact a queer one. The turn in gay and lesbian organizing toward a coalitional style of politics is not so queer. And the globalization of a hegemonic image of gay white maleness manifests itself in the rather queer commodity of "gay Cape Town". Thus we ought to reconsider the division between the normal and the queer that has entrenched itself within queer studies in recent years. As such, we also need to reconsider the changing political terrain upon which the cultural politics of sexuality play out.

³ For a similar argument about reliance upon a sphere "beyond" the hegemonic as an untenable feminist political and intellectual strategy, see Desbiens 1999.

The normal and the queer, resistance and capitulation, complicity and threat – none of these terms exists in absolute space. Yet we all too often present them as if they did. In analyzing why, I have kept in mind Foucault's instruction that space is where discourse becomes relations of power. As the ways in which hegemonic structures and processes present themselves has changed, queer theorists have critiqued the centre and dug in their heels as the excess at the margins. This is an important strategy but queer spaces cannot be prescribed. So it cannot be our only one.

Derek Gregory states:

Both spatial science and conventional social theory are now seen to have made too much of pattern and systematicity, labouring to solve what they usually called 'the problem of order', without recognizing the multiple ways in which life on earth evades and exceeds those orders (2000, 772).

Recognizing excess, he argues, is a much more radical claim than distinguishing between dominant productions of space and insurgent consumptions of space. As such, I am "drawn by what is ex-terminus, by what is beyond the end, or rather, by what declines – in the sense of bending away from – the end" (Clarke & Doel 2000, 231). That space is made and consumed at all scales and by all agents within and beyond the hegemonic means that we must consider more than a merely oppositional politics.

So, literally where do we go from here? I think we must go to the kinds of sites that the normalization debates implicitly decree are un-queer. In other words, we must direct our careful attention to the places where homosexuality has moved from the margins. I have found evidence of queering in narratives of "gay Cape Town" and in the incorporation of homosexuals into South Africa's new rights framework. Thus we might explore the particular ways in which pink markets, queer tourism initiatives, and liberal

political inclusions are spaces that are performatively produced as queer. More grandly put, we might begin to think about state, economic and global spaces as queer. In other words, rather than conceptualizing the state, the economy and the global spheres as things that impact upon queer lives, we might begin to pull apart how queerings are a part of processes of statization, economization, and globalization.

The prerequisites that I think must be met by queer geographers so that they might be able to engage in such studies is the subject of the final brief thoughts that follow.

2. Coda: Other everyday queer geographies

My intervention in these pages has focused on the ways in which questions about queer's incorporation and normalization are currently being asked so that we might ask them differently. Thus more questions have been raised and new areas of enquiry opened up than answers given. Each of the three empirical chapters that I have presented could easily be expanded into whole theses unto themselves. Instead of simply denouncing the rise of the pink market and the mainstreaming of queer politics and presuming the appropriation of alterity by an ever-and-only-consuming state or globalization, we might conduct historical analyses of pink marketing and ethnographic studies of queered companies and queered states. As I hold out these future areas for study, I want to turn away from my preoccupation with the geographies implicit to queer studies in a general sense to consider how such work might be taken up by queer geographers themselves.

“Rethinking social processes through space (what geographers now call space-time) offers opportunities to side-step some unproductive feminist standoffs about, for instance, the materiality of discourse and the possibilities of universal norms across difference” (Pratt 2004, 3). Likewise, as queer theorists explore the ways in which queer

incorporation is *made*, a nuanced understanding of space is indispensable. And so queer geographers should logically be at the forefront of the study of queer normalizations and incorporations. But to take up this task would in fact be a significant departure for queer geographies.

Elizabeth Povinelli implores queer theorists to deal with the “problem of the bullseye of the discipline”. She wants us to get past the assumption that “sexuality appears where it announces itself” (2003); an assumption that, I argue, queer geographers have been particularly prone to making.

Queer geographers call attention to the particular ways that queer bodies experience, negotiate and create space in various places and at various scales. As Brown and Knopp point out, “the oldest and most developed body of literature dealing with sexuality and space...is that which addresses sexuality in the context of ‘the urban’” (2003, 317: see Brown 1999; Davis 1995; Ingram, Bouthillette & Retter 1997; Knopp 1990; Knopp 1994; Valentine 1996). This urban bias has been countered in recent years, however, with much work on sexuality in rural locales (see Kramer 1995; Phillips, Watt & Shuttleton (eds) 1997). In addition, geographers have explored queer experiences in the domestic realm (see Jay 1997; Johnston & Valentine 1995), in public space (Browne 2004; Marston 2002) at the national scale (see Bell 1994 & 1995; Binnie 1997; Nast 1998), and even recently at the global scale (see Bacchetta 2002; Binnie 2004; Puar, Rushbrook & Schein (eds) 2003).⁴

With Bell et al, I agree that works such as those cited above have “shown that sexual identity impacts on the use and reading of space, and that the socially and

⁴ Though I am concerned only with work on queer spaces, the body of literature that addresses the geographies of sexuality is of course not confined only to this topic. There is, for instance, much work on geographies of AIDS and heterosexuality (see Brown 1995; Hubbard 2004; Little 2002; McDowell 1995).

culturally encoded character of space has bearing on the assuming and acting out of sexual identities" (1994, 31). This is an exceedingly important contribution. And it is one that has been taken up not only within but also far beyond the confines of the discipline of geography. But it is also limited. For, while the study of queer geographies has focused on the negotiation of queer subjectivities in space, it has not explored how spaces might be more abstractly understood as queer. To get at what I mean by this, I want to turn to an exploration of why we might want to think through what a queer geopolitics might look like and why we have not been able to conceptualize such a notion within current work on queer geographies.

With only a spate of work within geography on queerness at the national and global scales, it is hardly surprising that there is no work to date that thinks through what a queer geopolitics might entail. I argue that such a notion is not likely to emerge within queer geographies given the ways in which the notion of queers in space has been and continues to be framed within this literature. Before elucidating this point, however, a detour into feminist geographies is useful. For the notion of a feminist geopolitics has indeed been well-articulated.

In 1990, Eleonore Kofman and Linda Peake set out a "gendered agenda for political geography." And it is an agenda that hinges on the feminist tenet that the personal is political. They state that studies of sexual politics within political geography remain in their infancy because work within the subdiscipline "continue[s] to concentrate on the national level" (1990, 325). They thus set the stage for the feminist notion of geopolitics that has been articulated in the more recent past as follows.

In her piece entitled "Towards a feminist geopolitics", Jennifer Hyndman argues that, "relations of power at different scales (global, national, urban) are linked. They illustrate that global processes, whether economic, political, or socio-cultural, are experienced in localized, everyday, embodied ways" (2001, 212; see also Hyndman 2004). As such, Hyndman suggests that a feminist geopolitics is one that is attentive not only to the actions of states but also to the ways in which actions at the scale of the (inter)national and global are tied to experiences at the scale of the body. Similarly, Lorraine Dowler and Joanne Sharp advocate "a feminist geopolitics, an embodied position where different scales of analysis come together" so as to act as "a lens through which the everyday experiences of the disenfranchised can be made more visible" (2001, 167 & 169).⁵

Thus a feminist geopolitical analysis is one that includes everyday experiences by scaling down from the global to the "finer scale" of the body. And this strategy of scaling down is not just an integral part of formulations of feminist geopolitics. It characterizes feminist political geographies more broadly. As Brown and Staeheli state in their survey of this field: "Feminist analyses of scale...argue for the importance of considering the full range of scalar processes...; in so doing, our understanding of politics must incorporate the body, and not be limited by the troika of global-national-local" (2003, 250; for examples of feminist political geographies that utilize this strategy of scaling down see Devasahayam, Huang & Yeoh 2004; Mountz 2004; Nelson 2004; Secor 2004; Silvey 2004; Walton-Roberts 2004).

⁵ It should be noted that such framings of a feminist geopolitics as these build upon and add spatial nuance to similar feminist arguments that have been launched within political geography's cognate discipline of political science. Sources within feminist international relations include: Enloe 1989; Peterson 1992; Sylvester 1994.

Though not expressly concerned with geopolitics, work within queer geographies also emphasizes the scale of the body and the everyday. It looks at how persons embodied as queer negotiate heteronormative spaces and claim queer spaces in places as diverse as the street, the public restroom, the home and the countryside. And in a rare foray within the sexuality and space literature into the realm of conceptualizing how the more abstract space of politics affects queers, David Bell states:

A delve into the archaeology of Political Geography might make us think that it most certainly *isn't* a space to think about sex and sexuality – its agenda has always been with the Big Issues of nation states, of wars and peace, of boundaries and territories, elections and superpowers. In short, it has considered Politics with a capital P... What relevance can such an agenda have for the stuff of sex – the stuff of the bedroom and the body? I would like to argue here that it has tremendous relevance. To do this I want to show how the bedroom is a political (and politicized) space (1994, 445).

In this article, Bell explores government responses to AIDS and the political strategies of queer activist groups such as ACT UP, OutRage! and Queer Nation to demonstrate “how we can all find ourselves in bed with the state, subject to its surveillance and its censure” (1994, 445).

So there is scope for the development of a queer geopolitics after all. That is, there is scope for the development of a queer geopolitics that is articulated along the same lines as feminist geographers have articulated their feminist geopolitics. Indeed, an undoubtedly worthwhile project would be to articulate these two alternative geopolitical narratives in concert. However, there is another sense in which I think we should think about the geopolitical as queer (and feminist for that matter), a sense that aligns with the ways in which I have suggested that we rethink where queerness can be found. And it requires that we rethink how we cast the everyday.

A queer geopolitics articulated along the same lines as a feminist geopolitics would have us “scale down” to consider how everyday queer lives are affected by events at the grander scales of the national and global. Although this is a productive move and one that should continue to be made, I argue that it is not necessary to shift scales to conduct embodied geopolitical analyses of the everyday. I argue that we might also envision a queer geopolitics that takes seriously the prospect that the national and global scales are embodied queer spaces too.

As Marston and Staeheli point out:

People fight marginalisation, exclusion, and oppression on a variety of fronts, utilizing different strategies and sources of support. In fighting their exclusion, however, *these people and social groups are reconstructing the ties that bind residents together and the relationships that define citizenship* (1994, 847: quoted in Bell 1994, 450; my emphasis).

This sentiment resonates with the argument that I have been making throughout this thesis. As queer bodies negotiate their relationships with processes and structures like the state, the economy and globalization, these relationships are “reconstructed”. And, as a result, so might these structures and processes themselves be reconstructed. Brown and Knopp point out that:

the embodied experiences of real human beings are almost always queer in at least one dimension or another. They often involve, for example, iterative performances that reveal the constructedness of taken-for-granted everyday experiences and artifacts” (2003, 316).

They go on to list borders, nation-states and economies among these “taken-for-granted everyday experience[s] and artifacts”. Further, Sallie Marston, in a recent indictment of political geographers for failing to substantively engage cultural questions in its theorizations of the state, has stated that research on citizenship formations, “too

frequently, either explicitly or implicitly, conceptualizes citizenship as subordinate to the state. In these studies, it is the state that constructs citizens and not vice versa" (2004, 2). As constructions, nation-states and economies and, I would add, processes of globalization, are thus not best considered as forces that merely impact upon bodies. Rather, we should try to understand how they are embodied in particular ways themselves.

Feminist political geographers have invoked the notion of scale to understand gendered political geographies because they want to "open up the notion of politics, its forms and the sites of its practices" (Kofman & Peake 1990, 328). This is my goal as well. And in arguing for the exploration of queered globalizations and queered national political economies, I am not interested in shedding light on the complex reworkings of hegemonic structures and processes for complexity's sake. I am interested in framing a queer geopolitics that explores states, economies and globalizations as embodied because, as Marston declares in relation to the state, "understanding the state as the outcome of struggles over meaning and identity has specific and important geographical relevance not only for state theorizing, but also for resistance and change" (2004, 9).

So, where David Bell states that, since state regulation and surveillance pervades the private lives of sexual citizens, sex and sexuality can indeed be included in "Politics with a capital P", I argue that queerness must be included in "Politics with a capital P" because of the acceptance of gays and lesbians in various nation-states around the world. We need more than a "politics of scale and space that refigure our understandings of here, of who is here with us" (Joseph 2002a, 174). We also need a politics of scale that can help us understand where we are. For if we loosen the strictures imposed by the

normalization debates on what might count as queer spaces, we will need to be more attentive to trying to understand what kind of queer spaces we are in.

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