

## INTRODUCTION

Adi Kuntsman and Esperanza Miyake

How did this book start? One version of this answer would be: Esperanza, queer Japanese European who feels too white to be East Asian but too 'oriental' to be considered European; and Adi, queer Russian Jewish Middle Eastern who feels white but not quite. Put the two together in an academic conference hosted by a British University on Anglo-American constructions of Queer, and you get two dykes out of place.

Another version is our growing sense of dissatisfaction surrounding the ways in which 'raciality' is theorised and politicised within queer discourse and practice. The inclusion of a 'race paper' in conferences, or the few non-white participants becoming a representation of 'multiculturalism' in any given group promoting diversity: such attempts to consider the idea of 'race' alongside 'queer' often result in the submergence of raciality within queerness. These situations often leave the very racialised groups in question silent/silenced – 'out of place' – within supposedly queer spaces, and it is these silences which we wish to listen to. We believe that 'raciality' and 'queerness' should always be interrogated together as queerness/raciality in order to hear the invisible, to see the inaudible. How and/or what are the ways in which 'raciality' becomes silent and/or silenced within the queer discourse and practice? What do these silences do and how can they be conceptualised?

Back to the academic conference hosted by the British University... whether it was an imposed or self-imposed silence, neither of us felt we could discuss these issues adequately. The questions around silences in queerness/raciality drove us to organise a two-day workshop which opened a forum for students, scholars, artists and activists to explore the different

and differing experiences, definitions, and problems of each word – ‘out’, ‘place’, ‘silence – and how these may or may not affect the concept of ‘queerness/ raciality’. This workshop was neither a beginning nor an end, but the opening of a much needed debate on these issues out of which this book emerged. We see this book as a foot in the academic door, already open but only ajar.<sup>1</sup>

So what is *Out of Place: Interrogating Silences in Queerness/Raciality* about?

- Silences: how is raciality/queerness (self)regulated or (self)imposed?
- Politics: what is the place of queerness/raciality in contemporary politics?
- Places: how do places change/challenge/stabilise the experiences and modes of queerness/raciality?
- Visibility/visuality: is raciality/queerness always about being visible/visual?

All the papers answer one or more of these questions from a variety of experiential angles and academic perspectives. Not only do the papers address queerness/ raciality as a topic per se; they use it as a theoretical and political tool to analyse, and at times challenge, their own fields, epistemologies and ontologies. In that way queerness/raciality is not just about what happens at the intersection of ‘queer’ and ‘race’, but also about how this intersection weaves in and animates other aspects of life.

The book is divided into four parts. The papers in **Part I** all emerge at a particular moment in time: post 9/11, new neo-colonial wars in the name of security, and tightening governance of migrant populations. Driven by

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<sup>1</sup> Clearly we are not the first ones to step in, the way has already been paved by collections such as *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*, *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology and Social Text*, *Special Issue: What’s Queer about Queer Studies Now?* We aim to add to this growing but still very small body of work. However, this book also differs in several aspects: first of all, it is the first (or among the first) publications on the topic in the UK. Secondly, it aims to bridge art, politics and academia. And last but definitely not least, it aims to give voice to (predominantly) young and hitherto established scholars, artists and activists.

the feeling of political urgency, the papers focus on the formations of queerness/raciality in the context of the 'war on terror'.

Jasbir Puar's paper traces the current formations of the US national homosexuality, which she coins, 'homonationalism'. She explores how homosexual subjects, previously excluded from the nation, become complicit within nationalism through Orientalist constructions of Muslim sexuality and through participation in the national 'war on terror'. Jasbir urges to rethink queer theory by conceptualising the ways life and death are regulated simultaneously through race and sexuality.

Written collaboratively by three activists and scholars in Germany and the UK, the paper by Jin Haritaworn, Tamsila Tauqir and Esra Erdem confronts the language of queer rights and freedoms as it is propagated by white public figures in the two countries. Their paper problematises the Islamophobic discourses that portray Muslims as anti-queer and as a threat to national and global democracy. They call for an allied politics between queer and non-queer migrants, Muslims and other people of colour.

Adi Kuntsman's paper addresses the multi-layered work of violence in the context of nationalism, colonialism and the 'war on terror'. Based on an ethnographic study of Russian-speaking immigrants in Israel/Palestine, Adi maps the relations between homophobia and homopatriotism and looks at the ways sexual and racial hatred are intertwined through histories of association and shared genealogies of otherness and monstrosity.

**Part II** looks at how queerness/raciality both manifests and is manifested through corporeal and social practices in and of space. All papers self-reflexively use the body to analyse and be critical of the embodied nature of queerness/raciality.

Nina Held and Tara Leach question their different experiences within the same space of a lesbian bar in Manchester to reflect on the making of race in sexualised spaces through 'the look'. Their accounts reveal how bodies are read in space and how these readings are felt on and through the body.

Looking at a different queer space in Manchester, that of a gay and lesbian choir, Esperanza Miyake uses her own body to interrogate the *sound* of queerness/raciality. Reflecting on instances of ethnographic silences, Esperanza explores how music and music practices racialise and sexualise the singing body.

Thomas Viola Rieske's paper is a diary of a drag performance, referred

to as an ethnographic exercise to theorise the formations of ‘white beauty’. Thomas Viola takes his/her research and politics on the stage, challenging and stripping his/her own body as a way of intervening in the white dominance of queer spaces.

**Part III** raises the question of the relations between visibility and politics. The papers in this section explore not only who is visible but how, where and when they are visible and what their visibility does to queerness/raciality.

In her personal account as a Puerto-Rican, male-identified lesbian, and activist for justice and public intellectual, Carmen Vazquez argues that visibility is central to liberation. Carmen envisions a different form of queerness/raciality, one which sheds light on dirt, poverty, racism and everyday survival – making visible aspects, usually sacrificed in the name of liberation and assimilation.

Miriam Strube’s paper is similarly concerned with assimilationist homonormativity within the contemporary American context. Her paper addresses forms of visibility and visual representations of race, class, sexuality and gender in the popular TV series *The L Word*. Miriam argues that the series criticises heteronormativity and also contributes to complicating homonormativity, while not necessarily transgressing it.

**Part IV** looks at what translation does to queerness/raciality, and how queerness/raciality, in turn, illuminates the cultural, literary, linguistic and theoretical mechanisms involved in the processes of translation.

In his analysis of mainstream English-language media in India, Anirudha Dutta looks at the ways sexual practices are translated into signs of ‘Western-ness’ and ‘Indian-ness’. His article demonstrates how these translations animate the relations between globalisation, class and nationhood.

Based on an ethnographic study of LGBT Latinos/as in the US and El Salvador, Maria Amelia Viteri looks at what is happening at the intersection of queer and *latinidad*, borderlines, crossing and translation between languages and cultures, and also between lived lives and discourses, and the translation between ethnography and theory.

Umut Erel, Jin Haritaworn, Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez and Christian Klesse question the concept of intersectionality by tracing the concept across generations, cultures and locations. In the process they give an account of the concept’s history and limitations, and open up the de-

bate for future queer and feminist anti-racist politics.

We thus present you with *Out of Place: Interrogating Silences in Queerness/Raciality*. Whether you are an academic, an artist, activist and/or a curious reader, we hope this collection of papers provides you with the inspiration, enjoyment, challenge, and motivation – as it did for us – to keep engaging with what we consider to be an academically and politically imperative debate into and for the future.

### References

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