

UNIVERSITY OF VERONA

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SCIENCES  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES  
DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN HUMAN SCIENCES  
CYCLE XXIX

QUEER HEGEMONIES:  
POLITICS AND IDEOLOGY IN CONTEMPORARY  
QUEER DEBATES

IN *CO-TUTELLE DE THÈSE* WITH UTRECHT UNIVERSITY  
S.S.D. SPS/01

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, thanks to my family. To my brothers and sisters, for being an unlimited source of joy and pride. And to my parents, for their unconditional support.

Thanks to my supervisors. Lorenzo Bernini has changed the very way I think. His rigor and intellectual honesty are unique. Sandra Ponzanesi is a living example of how to bring lightness into academic life. Rosemarie Buikema is not only a kind supervisor, but also a generous boss.

In Verona, thanks to the group of political philosophy and to the research center Politesse – Politics and Theories of Sexuality, especially to Massimo Prearo. Thanks to Giulia Angonese and Valeria Mercandino, with whom I shared these three years. And to the people of Pink, who manage to keep a queer space alive and kicking in one of the most fascist cities of Italy. Finally, thanks to Michi.

In Utrecht, thanks to the Graduate Gender Programme and to the PhD crowd of Drift 15. Special thanks to our reading group: Katrine Smiet, Rasa Navickaitė, Natashe Lemos Dekker, Gisela Carrasco Miro, Freya de Mink, Laura Candidatu, Vasso Belia, Elisa Fiore, and Adriano José Habel. I'm sure that meeting you all years ago is one of the reasons why I decided to stay in academia.

Thanks to Tim Huzar and German Eduardo Primera Villamizar. Our collaboration between Brighton and Verona has been one of the most inspiring experiences during these three years. Thanks to Gloria Wekker for participating in my research. To Sara Garbagnoli and Konstantinos Eleftheriadis, for their friendship and the endless conversations. Thanks to those who have read and commented on parts of the dissertation at different stages: Mark Devenney, Gianfranco Rebutini, Jamila M.H. Mascot, Laura Candidatu, Layal Ftouni, Katrine Smiet, Mariëlle Smith, and Adriano José Habel. Thanks to my sister Marta for the design of this book.

Adri, there are no words to thank you properly. For the support, the skepticism and the critiques, all the care work, and your love.



## INTRODUCTION

# QUEER HEGEMONIES

In July 2016, the Toronto chapter of Black Lives Matter (BLM)—the antiracist movement emerged four years earlier in the United States—staged a protest during the local LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer) Pride.<sup>1</sup> BLM activists interrupted the march for about half an hour. They protested, among other things, the lack of institutional and economic support for the presence of black queer collectives at the Pride, the underrepresentation of trans women of color, queer people of color, and indigenous queers within its organizational structures, the disappearance of the South Asian stage from the march, and the presence of police forces in uniform.<sup>2</sup> Months before, BLM had been invited to lead the Pride as a “honoured group.”<sup>3</sup> Instead of declining the invitation, as the local chapter of the movement did in San Francisco,<sup>4</sup> the Toronto chapter chose to seize that space. Upon consulting with groups that either had been boycotting the Pride for a long time or have been progressively marginalized within the organization of the event, such as Black Queer Youth, BLM decided to disrupt the march in order to publicly articulate a number of demands rooted in the struggles of trans and queer people of color. The protest ended when Mathieu Chantelois, executive director of Pride Toronto at the time, signed a document through which he committed to implementing such demands. Chantelois backpedaled the next day, stating that his only concern had been to interrupt the protest. Yet, at its annual general meeting in January 2017, Pride Toronto voted in favor of endorsing all of the demands originally put forward by BLM, including the banning of police floats from the march.

It is not surprising that a critique of the Pride was articulated, in Toronto, by

this particular black antiracist formation. In its composition, BLM illustrates some key transformations in the contemporary field of antiracist, feminist, and LGBTQ politics. Formed in the United States in 2012, after seventeen-year-old African American Trayvon Martin was shot to death by police officer George Zimmerman and the latter was acquitted for his crime, BLM is a movement primarily organized around the problem of anti-black racism. However, the ramifications of race along axes of gender and sexuality are not obscured, but rather emphasized. The movement was initiated by three black queer women—Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi, and Patrisse Cullors—and depicts itself as follows: “Black Lives Matter affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender spectrum. It centers those that have been marginalized within Black liberation movements. It is a tactic to (re)build the Black liberation movement.”<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, at a particular historical juncture when anti-black violence has resurfaced in plain view in the United States, BLM reflects the need to reconstruct a terrain of antagonism around the color line and to reactivate black antiracism as a form of radical *mass* organizing. On the one hand, its queer composition has also turned the movement into a platform from which to articulate an antiracist critique of contemporary LGBTQ politics.

Thus, the significance of the protest staged by BLM at the Pride in Toronto goes beyond the concrete transformations that may actually take place in the future organization of the march. BLM’s intervention is illustrative of broader processes of recomposition affecting the field of contemporary identity political formations. Through the past twenty years, the problems of race and racism have been gaining increasing centrality in LGBTQ politics as well as queer theory. This process has been key in reorienting queer critique toward questions of material redistribution. For instance, central to BLM’s protest at the Pride in Toronto was a critique of the defunding of black queer collectives in favor of a marketization of the march.<sup>6</sup> To be sure, these recompositions of the field of identity politics do not often reach the peak—as in the experience of BLM—of entirely shifting the terrain of radical queer critique from LGBTQ formations to antiracist formations. In this respect, BLM is to a certain extent exceptional. Nonetheless, recalling W. E. B. Du Bois (1903) with a difference, one could argue that the problem of the color line has become, for LGBTQ politics and queer theory, the problem of the twenty-first century.<sup>7</sup>

The rise to prominence of race as a queer question has been not only,

but also a response to broader shifts rightward in contemporary sexual politics. By receding from the terrain of social and economic justice and embracing a politics of formal equality, pursuing almost unilaterally the achievement of same-sex marriage and other forms of state-sanctioned recognition, significant segments of LGBTQ movements across the global North have been facilitating a convergence between progressive sexual politics and neoliberalism. Concrete alliances established with centrist parties on both sides of the Atlantic—for instance, with the New Democrats of Bill Clinton in the United States through the 1990s—have presided over such a convergence. This realignment has intensified conflicts over class and race within LGBTQ formations. Contemporary queer critiques of the Pride marches are once again exemplary. Those who point out the increasing marketization of the marches, and the privileging of corporate sponsors’ interests over political content, usually do so by recalling the class and racial composition of the crowd who famously revolted against the police at the Stonewall Inn on June 28, 1969. BLM made this point during their protest in Toronto: “We threw bricks for you. We got locked up for you. . . . Don’t you ever forget your queer histories. Don’t you ever forget who made this possible!”

This reclaiming of a trans and queer of color history is often mobilized, in the present, as a vantage point on the heterogeneous effects of neoliberalization on racially and economically segmented LGBTQ formations. To this, we must add the transformations of the racial field itself in the wake of the terrorist attacks in New York on September 11, 2001, commonly referred to as 9/11. Since the immediate aftermath of the attacks, sexual progress has been largely mobilized, both in Europe and the United States, for the articulation of specific forms of racism, nationalism, and imperialism. The populations targeted by the ongoing “war on terror”—especially Muslim, Arab, and South Asian populations—are racialized *as* “sexually backward” and as a threat to Western progress. In this context, BLM’s demand that Pride Toronto reinstates the South Asian stage, which had disappeared from the march, gains additional significance. It is in light of these transformations of progressive sexual politics—its convergences with neoliberalism, racism, nationalism, and imperialism—that one has to understand the contemporary recompositions of LGBTQ formations around the problem of the color line.

This dissertation explores these transformations and recompositions as they have been materializing, first and foremost, in the theoretical

field. In particular, it takes as its starting point three attempts to *name* the contemporary shifts rightward in progressive sexual politics, for these attempts have been particularly successful in reorienting contemporary queer debates. In *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (2003), Lisa Duggan conceptualizes the emergence of what she terms “homonormativity”: a sexual politics ideologically aligned with the politico-economic project of neoliberalism through the promotion of “a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (50). Duggan argues that the politics of homonormativity—first articulated in the late 1990s by small but influential U.S. gay right-wing formations, such as the Log Cabin Republicans—must be understood as part and parcel of a broader shift in the ideological apparatus of neoliberalism: from the alliances with sexual conservatives and white supremacists typical of the Thatcher-Reagan era, toward a contemporary non-redistributive politics of equality absorbing significant segments of LGBTQ movements.

In *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007), Jasbir K. Puar draws in part on Duggan’s analysis in order to diagnose the formation of a national homonormativity, or “homonationalism,” in the specific context of the “war on terror.” Puar points at the incorporation of elements of LGBTQ discourses into U.S. nationalism after 9/11. Through this incorporation, she argues, the United States could be ideologically produced as a safe space for queers by means of comparison with a “repressed” Arab world, even as an aggressively heteropatriarchal nationalism was reactivated both at home and during the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Finally, in *Desiring Arabs* (2007), Joseph A. Massad focuses on the Arab world and develops an analysis of sexual imperialism. The main target of Massad’s critique is what he terms the “Gay International”: an ensemble of international LGBTQ organizations and intellectuals invested into the saving of Arab gays and lesbians. In his view, even as the Gay International advocates sexual liberation, it is in fact centrally responsible for the articulation of popular and state homophobia in contemporary Arab societies. For Massad, this sexual imperialism is organic to the broader edifice of Western imperialism in the Arab world.

The concepts of “homonormativity,” “homonationalism,” and “sexual imperialism” have been circulating widely not only within the field of queer theory, but also across the boundaries between the theoretical and the political fields. Forms of antagonism such as the one articulated by

BLM at the Pride in Toronto are informed by—and continue to inform—contemporary queer debates.<sup>8</sup> Against the background of these exchanges across the theory/practice divide, this dissertation contributes to the debates on homonormativity, homonationalism, and sexual imperialism by locating these concepts on the specific terrain of *theoretical practice*. My primary matter of concern is what they do—as conceptual abstractions and theoretical moments—to queer theory as a field. In other words, rather than assuming a transparent relationship between the theoretical field and the field of social and political struggles, I approach the production of theory itself as a practice and as a terrain of struggle. What transformations and processes of recomposition has queer theory undergone in the wake of the appearance of homonormativity, homonationalism, and sexual imperialism within the field? In order to address this question, I read *both* the contemporary shifts rightward in progressive sexual politics *and* the recompositions of the queer theoretical field through the theory of hegemony developed by Stuart Hall.

In the 1980s, Hall appropriated and reactivated the conceptual apparatus elaborated five decades earlier by Antonio Gramsci in order to understand the specific emergence of Thatcherism in Britain (see Hall 1987; [1980] 1988; 1988c; Hall and Jacques 1989). Bringing Hall's reading of Gramsci into contemporary debates on homonormativity, homonationalism, and sexual imperialism has three implications. First, I suggest that these contemporary shifts rightward in progressive sexual politics maintain important relations of continuity with political and ideological processes inaugurated in the 1980s. Second, I recover key concepts of Hall's analysis—first and foremost, the concept of hegemony—that were central to the early project of cultural studies but have faded into the background or even disappeared from contemporary queer debates. I argue that such concepts can help us pose a number of questions that other theoretical languages assimilated by the field—such as Michel Foucault's reconceptualization of power in terms of discipline and biopolitics—tend to overlook (see Foucault [1976] 1978; [1997] 2003; [2004] 2007). Finally, I propose to understand in terms of hegemony and counter-hegemony, not only the current transformations of sexual politics, but also the transformations and recompositions of the field of queer theory. In fact, a reflection on the relationship between theory and practice informs this dissertation as a whole. I address this theoretical problem in different ways throughout the three chapters and I further emphasize it at the end of each chapter, where I present and discuss

a political vignette that speaks back to the theoretical debates.

The first chapter, “Thinking with Stuart Hall: Hegemony and Identity Politics,” is devoted to Hall’s reading of Gramsci. In his *Prison Notebooks* ([1929-1935] 1971), Gramsci argued that a socialist politics in liberal societies must confront the rule of the bourgeoisie not just through frontal attack, but seizing spaces in civil society. This is so because, in his view, a dominant class in liberal societies does not rule only through coercion, but through a combination of coercion and consent: hegemony. In other words, a dominant class can consolidate and exercise its power only if it is able to operate across the terrains of both state and civil society, articulating the interests of heterogeneous social segments into what Gramsci termed a “hegemonic bloc.” The politics of hegemony and counter-hegemony is, for Gramsci, a “war of position” taking place first and foremost on the terrain of civil society. In the 1980s, Hall elaborated on Gramsci’s theory of hegemony to conceptualize a triangular relation between the rise of Thatcherism, a crisis of the British Left, and the emergence of new identity politics. In Hall’s view, the problem of identity—opened up in the 1970s by new social movements such as feminism, gay and lesbian liberation, and Black Power—came to constitute a key terrain of struggle in the war of position between the Left and the New Right of Margaret Thatcher. According to his analysis, while Thatcherism was quick to size that terrain and to articulate it rightward, along conservative lines, the Left was unable or even reluctant to occupy the same terrain on socialist terms (see Hall and Jacques 1983). For Hall, it is also because of its failure to understand identity as a relevant terrain of struggle that the Left lost ground and failed to confront the increasing ascendancy of Thatcherism.

Hall turned to Gramsci because the theory of hegemony that the latter elaborated in the 1920s and 1930s represented in the first place a critique of Marxist economic reductionism and a refusal to locate politics and ideology as superstructural by-products of the economic base. Questioning the classical Marxist base-superstructure metaphor, Gramsci argued that “the superstructures of civil society” are key sites to be seized in a struggle for hegemony (Hall 1986a). Drawing on Gramsci’s critique of economic reductionism, and in close dialogue with Louis Althusser and Ernesto Laclau, Hall developed a theory of the “relative autonomy” of the political and the ideological from the level of the economic. In his view, the convergences between the three levels are never given, but are rather the effects of practices of “articulation.” So the question in the 1980s,

for Hall, was not whether identity politics are inherently conservative or progressive, but how they were being contingently articulated in the course of the struggle for hegemony conducted by Thatcherism. In this way, he was able to project the problem of identity at the core of the struggle between Thatcherism and the Left, yet maintaining that identity politics possess their own relative autonomy.

On the one hand, in the first chapter I recover key aspects of Hall's theoretical intervention: his reading of Gramsci and of the theory of hegemony, his analysis of Thatcherism, his critical dialogues with Louis Althusser and Ernesto Laclau, his theory of "articulation" and his conceptualization of the ideological and the political levels as "relatively autonomous" from the economic, and his Marxist approach to the problem of identity politics. On the other hand, I zoom in on specific moments that reveal the centrality of identity to the struggle for hegemony conducted by Thatcherism. I discuss in particular two "moral panics": a moral panic about race and mugging that Hall and his colleagues analyze in depth in *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (Hall *et al.* 1978), and the panic about homosexuality that led to the introduction of the infamous Section 28 in the Local Government Act (1988) of the third Thatcher government, which prohibited "the promotion of homosexuality" by local authorities. At the end of the chapter, I recall the experience of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM), a group of lesbians and gays that formed in London in order to support the miners on strike, in 1984-85, against the second Thatcher government. The story of LGSM illustrates the possible articulations *and* the tensions between identity politics and the politics of hegemony and counter-hegemony.

In the next two chapters, I turn to contemporary queer debates, which I approach through the lens of Hall's conceptual apparatus. In the second chapter, "Homonormativity, Intersectionality, and the 'Marxist Renaissance' in Queer Theory," I interrogate Lisa Duggan's (2003) work on homonormativity and its impact on contemporary queer debates. Duggan virtually drives Hall's analysis forward in the twenty-first century while shifting the focus from the British context to the United States. While Hall argued, in the 1980s, that the failure of the British Left to engage with identity politics would concede space to Thatcherism, and that the latter would occupy that terrain on conservative terms, Duggan reconstructs the process through which the neoliberal bloc itself proceeded to shift its approach to the problem of identity through the 1990s. In her view, as the Left continued

to debate whether a politics of class conflict was compatible or not with the politics of gender, race, and sexuality, advocates of neoliberalism began to establish new alliances with segments of the LGBTQ movement in the United States, embracing a non-redistributive politics of equality. Unlike Hall, Duggan primarily focuses on the transformations of identity political formations themselves, rather than locating the latter as a key terrain to be seized in a war of position between Left and Right. Like Hall, however, she situates these transformations within broader struggles for hegemony—more specifically, as part of a shift in the politico-ideological apparatus of the neoliberal bloc.

This chapter begins by rereading the well-known exchange on redistribution and recognition between Judith Butler (1997b) and Nancy Fraser (1997b), which in many ways prepared the ground for Duggan’s intervention and, more broadly, for contemporary queer debates about the relation between sexual politics and capitalism. While Butler argues, in that exchange, that LGBTQ politics intrinsically undermine the very structure of capitalism, Fraser replies that recognition and redistribution are politically and analytically distinct terrains of struggle. Rather than siding with either Butler or Fraser, I suggest that their exchange *both* anticipates queer debates that began to unfold at the turn of the twenty-first century *and* fails to register the specificities of the emerging conjuncture: that is, the articulation of homonormativity. Hence, after discussing Duggan’s analysis of homonormativity as a sexual politics politically and ideologically aligned with neoliberalism, the rest of the chapter explores key transformations of the queer theoretical field in the wake of this shift of the politico-ideological terrain, which neither Butler nor Fraser anticipated. On the one hand, I locate here what I term a “Marxist renaissance” in queer theory, suggesting that this contemporary reencounter between queer theory and Marxism is largely a response to the emergence of homonormativity. I identify the analysis offered by Kevin Floyd in *The Reification of Desire: Toward a Queer Marxism* (2009) as a central contribution to this reencounter. On the other hand, I discuss the formation of queer of color critique, mainly through a reading of Roderick A. Ferguson’s *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (2004). I propose that this theoretical formation mediates both the contemporary “Marxist renaissance” in queer theory and the critique of homonormativity. And I argue that it does so by struggling to hegemonize the color line within the field.

Central to this chapter is the problem of identity politics. In the face

of homonormativity, queer critiques of identity politics proliferate today. Both identity politics and identity as such are often regarded as instances of the “reification” of social relations under capitalism, especially in its neoliberal phase. Instead, I propose to conceptualize identity politics as an expansive and intersectional field of identifications and disidentifications. Emphasizing the struggle around the color line conducted by queer of color critique within the field of queer theory, and bringing Hall’s insights into these contemporary debates, I suggest that identity politics be understood as a possible (if not necessary) terrain of recomposition. I conclude the chapter by reconstructing the political life narrative of Afro-Dutch lesbian feminist Gloria Wekker, tracing her passages through antiracist, feminist, and LGBTQ formations as well as academic spaces in the Netherlands from the 1970s to the present. On the one hand, grounding my analysis in the specificities of the Dutch context, I suggest that antiracist organizing, rather than LGBTQ organizing, may function today as a privileged terrain for the articulation of queer critiques of homonormativity. In other words, I observe a tendency toward recomposition similar to the one illustrated by BLM in the United States. On the other hand, by bringing into focus Wekker’s struggles within the university, I point at the ways in which such a recomposition is crucially mediated by the seizing of institutional space. Wekker’s political life narrative illustrates the conditions of possibility for a continuous exchange across the theory/practice divide as well as the transformations taking place in both fields through the emergence of race as a queer question.

In the third chapter, “Queer Diasporic Critiques of Homonationalism and Sexual Imperialism,” I continue a discussion of the contemporary transformations of the queer theoretical field by focusing on Jasbir K. Puar’s (2007) critique of homonationalism and Joseph A. Massad’s (2007) critique of sexual imperialism in the Arab world. The chapter begins by profiling the contours of queer diasporic critique, a theoretical formation that significantly overlaps with queer of color critique and joins the latter in its struggle around the color line in queer theory. While the boundaries between the two can be defined only precariously and provisionally, I emphasize the distinct transnational scope of queer diasporic critique. I do so through a reading of key interventions by Gayatri Gopinath (2005a), Chandan Reddy (2011), and Martin F. Manalansan IV (2003). Hence, I locate Puar’s and Massad’s respective analyses within this field even as I point out that neither of the two is exemplary, strictly speaking, of a queer

diasporic theoretical practice. On the contrary, even though their critiques of homonationalism and sexual imperialism have played a central role in orienting the queer diasporic field, both Puar and especially Massad take distance, in different ways and to different extents, from queer diasporic theoretical *and* political formations.

Nonetheless, I locate Puar's and Massad's interventions on the terrain of queer diasporic critique because this allows me to conduct a specific discussion of their theoretical practice. Many critics of Puar and Massad have been signaling precisely their diasporic location in the United States in order to question the capacity of their analyses to account for LGBTQ struggles unfolding on the other side of the transnational divide (see Castro Varela and Dhawan 2011; Ritchie 2014). Similarly, I pose a question of diasporic theoretical practice: to what extent are queer diasporic analyses of homonationalism and sexual imperialism able, not only to join queer of color formations in their struggle around the color line in the global North, but also to articulate the struggles taking place in the South? I address this question in two ways. First, both Puar and Massad significantly draw on Michel Foucault's conceptualization of power in terms of discipline and biopolitics. Thus, in order to interrogate their conceptual apparatus, I recover 1980s debates on theoretical practice involving Foucault, Hall, and Edward W. Said. Second, I propose an alternative approach to the problems of homonationalism and sexual imperialism, drawing on Rahul Rao's (2014; 2015) analyses of the formation of homophobia in contemporary Uganda. Through a materialist reading close to Hall's, Rao reaches a key conclusion: rather than "locating" it culturally or geographically, homophobia must be "dispersed" as an object of both theoretical inquiry and political practice.

Following this call for dispersing homophobia, I conclude the chapter by shifting the attention from the global South to the European South. Here, I analyze the contemporary war on "gender ideology" taking place in both Southern and Eastern European peripheries, with a particular focus on Italy. With the term "gender ideology," its opponents—the Vatican, the local far-right, and Catholic conservative formations—draw together an heterogeneous ensemble of queer and feminist theories, lobbying organizations, equality legislation, and sexual education initiatives. Such heterogeneous elements are portrayed as the vectors of an "ideological colonization" proceeding from the United States as well as from European and international institutions (see Garbagnoli 2014; Bernini 2014). I suggest

that the war on “gender ideology” must be understood in relation to the concrete conjuncture of European peripheral social formations, defined by the current politico-economic crisis in Europe (see Grzebalska 2016). On the one hand, by turning to Europe itself, I aim to undo the divide between Western sexual freedom and Third World homophobia, which structures the politics and ideologies of homonationalism and sexual imperialism. On the other hand, I emphasize the antagonisms activated among queer critics about *how* to understand and to resist this conservative campaign. Through this discussion, I conclude a reflection on theoretical practice that runs throughout the dissertation as a whole.

Moving from Hall’s reading of Gramsci in the first chapter to contemporary queer debates in the next two chapters, this dissertation offers an analysis of queer theoretical practices in times of homonormativity, homonationalism, and sexual imperialism, and in the context of a “Marxist renaissance” within the field. By conducting this analysis through the lens of the theory of hegemony, I suggest that queer theory does not lose sight of politics and ideology and their relative autonomy. Indeed, one of the insights guiding my reflections is that if one stops naming a problem—especially without having shifted the *problematic* that her or his critique is meant to address—that problem will most probably come back with a vengeance. In the third chapter, I make this point about ideology. I observe that the disappearance of a conceptualization of ideology often ends up reintroducing a totalizing notion of it into the analysis, if under the guise of different names. A similar point holds for identity politics. A dismissal of identity politics can very well coexist with its most circular and vacuous practicing, both in the theoretical and the political field. Instead, I suggest that we continue to conceptualize identity politics as an expansive and intersectional field of antagonisms and recomposition, in order to know how to navigate it. I develop this insight by recovering Hall’s approach to identity politics as a terrain of hegemonic struggle.

The merge of “queer” and “hegemony” in the title of this dissertation indicates this attempt to bring the theory of hegemony into contemporary queer debates. Yet, even as “queer hegemonies” also points at some elements of my analysis—the centrality of sexual politics to contemporary constructions of hegemony and the activation of hegemonic struggles within the field of queer theory—I do not offer it as a new conceptual construct. In fact, it makes no other appearance in the dissertation except for the title. While the invention of concepts forms part of the practice of

critical theory, it may have also become a function, today, of an increasingly accelerated mode of intellectual labor. In her dissertation, titled *Travelling Truths: Sojourner Truth, Intersectionality, and Feminist Scholarship* (2017), Katrine Smiet detects a certain circularity in contemporary debates on intersectionality, and comments: “In this publishing market, there is a growing pressure to coin new concepts and theories rather than build on already existing frameworks. . . . This may be a reason behind the cycle of critique and defense within the intersectionality scholarship” (211). For similar reasons, I refrain from adding “queer hegemonies” to a theoretical landscape saturated with concepts of recent coinage—some of which are very effective in naming the contemporary transformations of sexual politics. Rather, I propose that contemporary queer debates would benefit from an engagement with the theory of hegemony. Puar suggests that “[q]ueer times require even queerer modalities of thought” (Puar 2005, 121). Instead, I suspect that what is most needed in contradictory times are concepts and theoretical practices that help us untangle the contradictions. Hegemony, as theorized by Gramsci in the 1930s and redeployed by Hall in the 1980s, is one such concept.

## CHAPTER ONE

# THINKING WITH STUART HALL: HEGEMONY AND IDENTITY POLITICS

Gramsci gives us, not the tools with which to solve the puzzle, but the means with which to ask the right kind of questions.

Stuart Hall, “Gramsci and Us”

In the 1970s and 1980s, while the field of cultural studies was consolidating its presence on the intellectual scene of the Left in Britain, Stuart Hall—perhaps the most significant “founding figure” in the field—engaged in the process of appropriating and reactivating the conceptual apparatus elaborated five decades earlier by Italian communist militant and thinker Antonio Gramsci.<sup>1</sup> Of course, Hall was not the only reader of Gramsci in Britain at the time.<sup>2</sup> Yet his turn to Gramsci was peculiar, for it was specifically meant to conceptualize a triangular relation between the rise of Thatcherism, a crisis of the British Left, and the emergence of new social movements and identity politics of gender, race, and sexuality.<sup>3</sup> Hall and other critics who gathered around *Marxism Today*, the theoretical magazine of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), termed this particular conjuncture: “New Times” (Hall and Jacques 1983; 1989).<sup>4</sup> In Hall’s view, one of the defining features of that conjuncture was the formation of *identity* as a key terrain of politico-ideological struggle, which the Left—as opposed to Thatcherism—was failing or even refusing to identify as such. In other words, according to Hall’s analysis, the Left increasingly lost ground in its confrontation with Thatcherism because of its failure to

register a shifting of the very terrain on which the struggle for hegemony was taking place.

While this dissertation is primarily concerned with contemporary shifts rightward in sexual politics and the corresponding transformations of queer theory, this first chapter explores Hall's reading of Gramsci in the 1970s and 1980s. I propose to think with Hall for three different but interrelated reasons. First, to resituate Hall's understanding of politics and ideology—and, more broadly, his interrogation of the relations between culture and power—at the core of cultural studies, for this is the field in which contemporary queer debates are largely taking place, especially in the United States.<sup>5</sup> Second, to revisit today, in the face of a “Marxist renaissance” in queer theory,<sup>6</sup> a particular moment in which identity politics made their troubling appearance on the horizon of Marxism and the Left.<sup>7</sup> Hall's theorizing is instructive precisely to the extent that it does not posit an “easy fit” between Marxism and identity politics, but rather struggles to work through their tensions and contradictions. Third, I turn to Hall because his reading of Gramsci, as mentioned above, led him to understand the rise of Thatcherism in a triangular relation with a crisis of the British Left and the emergence of identity politics. Despite the profound transformations of the social and the political fields through the past forty years, I suggest that Hall's reading of that conjuncture proves still relevant in order to understand the current rearticulations rightward of sexual politics.

I turn to Hall in the same spirit with which Hall himself turned to Gramsci: looking not for ready-made answers as much as for ways of posing the right kind of questions. Indeed, Hall's reading of Gramsci not only provides us with a set of useful theoretical concepts, but is first and foremost exemplary of a specific *theoretical practice*. Hall never made use of Gramscian concepts by simply “applying” them to the field of social and political practices he set out to understand. His readings of Gramsci and of Thatcherism informed each other in a way that allowed Hall to offer an analysis of the political conjuncture and at the same time intervene, through that conjunctural analysis, in broader debates going on in Marxist theory. The relation between theory and practice, as well as the one between the abstract and the concrete, constituted for Hall theoretical problems in their own right. In a key essay titled “Marx's Notes on Method” ([1974] 2003), he addresses such problems at length while offering a close reading of Marx's “1875 Introduction” to the *Grundrisse*. Here, Hall argues that Marxist theory

neither transparently *reflects* the concrete social and political fields nor can develop *independently* from them. Rather, as he puts it, theoretical practice always maintains a relation of “relative autonomy” to the “concrete” that it struggles to appropriate. This approach to theoretical practice, which Hall recovers from Marx and Gramsci and reactivates in the context of Thatcherism, is yet another reason why I propose to think with Hall about the current transformations of sexual politics and queer theory.

In the first section of this chapter, I expand in more detail on the historical and theoretical reasons why this dissertation turns to Hall’s reading of Gramsci in the 1970s and 1980s. In the next section, I introduce Hall’s take on the Gramscian concept of “hegemony” vis-à-vis the reading of Gramsci offered by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* ([1985] 2001). I argue that, despite their contiguous political and theoretical commitments, what primarily distinguishes Laclau and Mouffe’s reading from Hall’s is precisely a divergence of theoretical practices. In the third section, I briefly introduce Hall’s analysis of Thatcherism as a form of “authoritarian populism”: an ideological construction of popular consent to a distinctly authoritarian political project. Hence, I zoom in on the theoretical problem of ideology in the fourth section, where I trace Hall’s approach to ideology through his readings of Marx and Gramsci as well as his confrontations with key contemporary interlocutors, particularly Althusser and Laclau. The concept of ideology is central to Hall’s understanding of Thatcherism, for his analyses suggest that the latter owed large part of its success to an ability—unparalleled on the Left—of seizing the emerging politico-ideological terrain of identity politics.

Thus, in the fifth section, I discuss the specific role played by identity politics in the struggle for hegemony conducted by Thatcherism through the 1970s and 1980s. I do so by focusing on two moral panics: on the one hand, a panic about mugging and race in 1972-73, which also allows me to recover the monumental analysis carried out by Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts in *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (1978); on the other hand, a panic about homosexuality in 1987-88, which accompanied the introduction of the infamous Section 28 prohibiting the “promotion of homosexuality” in the Local Government Act (1988) of the third Thatcher government. Finally, I conclude the chapter by recalling the political experience of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM). This small group of lesbians and gays was formed in London in order to support the miners on strike in 1984-85

against the program of pit closures of the second Thatcher government. How does this attempt to confront the Thatcherite regime on the basis of a cross-class and cross-identity alliance contribute to the theory of hegemony and counter-hegemony?

### *Hall and Us*

Although Hall has repeatedly refused to be identified as the “founding father” of cultural studies (Hall 1992a, 277; 1996, 396), his key contribution to the development of the field is unquestionable. The story of the beginning of cultural studies is well-known: the field was first institutionalized through the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), at the University of Birmingham, in 1964.<sup>8</sup> The CCCS was founded by Richard Hoggart, who four years later was going to be replaced, as Director of the center, by Hall himself. Hall kept the position from 1968 until 1979, when he joined the Open University. The so-called Birmingham school of cultural studies (or British cultural studies) was characterized since its inception by a collective and interdisciplinary practice, located at the crossroads of literary criticism, sociology, and critical theory and in polemic, to varying degrees, with each one of them. As Cary Nelson, Paula A. Treichler, and Lawrence Grossberg point out in their introduction to *Cultural Studies* (1992), not only does cultural studies resist definitions as a disciplinary field, but it is also hard to simply define as an *interdisciplinary* enterprise: “cultural studies is not merely interdisciplinary; it is often, as others have written, actively and aggressively anti-disciplinary—a characteristic that more or less ensures a permanently uncomfortable relation to academic disciplines” (1-2).<sup>9</sup>

Such a beginning made cultural studies, from the outset, difficult to circumscribe as a field provided with proper objects, scopes, and methods. In fact, as Hall himself relentlessly pointed out, this definitional difficulty formed integral part of the very project of cultural studies. It was, at least in part, intentional: “The first issue of *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* appeared in 1972. The title ‘Working Papers’ was deliberately intended to set the terms of our approach. . . . We rejected, in short, a descriptive definition or prescription of the field” (Hall [1980] 2005a, 2). The subsequent internationalization of already such an open field—sustained not only but also by the boom of funding opportunities connected to the fresh academic

“brand,” particularly in the United States—has been making the task of definition even harder, to the point of producing a terrain of reflection in its own right and such publications as *What is Cultural Studies? A Reader* (Storey 1996). As John Storey tellingly points out in the preface to that volume, the latter “is an introduction to cultural studies through a series of attempts to define cultural studies” (ix). In other words, because of its origins as well as its subsequent quick expansion, theoretical efforts to define the field have become integral to the field itself.

Many have been worrying about the effects of the cultural studies boom. Hall discussed this matter in his keynote address at a conference on ‘Cultural Studies Now and in the Future,’ held at the University of Illinois in April 1990. The piece was later published in the volume mentioned above by Grossberg, Treichler, and Nelson (1992), another famous attempt at mapping and defining the field. Here, Hall remarks that the rapid institutionalization of cultural studies in the United States through the 1980s seemed not to be matched by an accurate interrogation of the very dangers of institutionalization (Hall 1992a, 285-286). Among such dangers, he signals not so much a retreat from the political, but rather a tendency to approach the problem of power with a distinctive “theoretical fluency”: “There is no moment now, in American cultural studies, where we are *not* able, extensively and without end, to theorize power—politics, race, class, and gender, subjugation, domination, exclusion, marginality, Otherness, etc. . . . Nevertheless, there are ways of constituting power as an easy floating signifier which just leaves the crude exercise and connections of power and culture altogether emptied of any signification” (286). In his own contribution to the same volume, for instance, Tony Bennett (1992, 23) suggests that what may define cultural studies as a whole is its focus on the relations between culture and power. But what is the nature of such relations? Does not the ubiquitous invocation of the link between culture and power leave it, in Hall’s words, emptied of any signification, that is, of any concrete determination? Commenting on Bennett’s proposition, the editors of the volume observe: “To work even within that rather broad configuration . . . requires an analysis of those relations of power. . . . Moreover, the word ‘relations’ opens out into cultural studies’ long history of efforts to theorize and grasp the mutual determinations and interrelations of cultural forms and historical forces” (Nelson, Treichler, and Grossberg 1992, 3).

By turning to Hall’s reading of Gramsci in the 1970s and 1980s, this

chapter recovers one key passage is such a long history of theorization.<sup>10</sup> According to Storey, this legacy of Hall's is what characterizes even "the best" of cultural studies: "It is the 'Gramscian insistence,' . . . learnt from Marx, that we make culture and we are made by culture; there is agency and there is structure. . . . The best of cultural studies has always been mindful of this" (Storey 1996, 11). However, while suggesting to think with Hall and to recover his reading of Gramsci for contemporary queer debates, I do not intend to police the whole field and drag it back to one of its inaugural theoretical moments, if only because this is not a chapter *about* cultural studies as a field.<sup>11</sup> Rather, my focus is limited to Hall's politico-philosophical interventions into the debates of his time.<sup>12</sup> I argue that such Gramscian concepts as "hegemony," "historical bloc," and "war of position"—which in part hegemonized the work carried out at the CCCS under Hall's directorship, but were later largely abandoned under the pressure of new theoretical moments—may help us pose today a number of questions that other theoretical languages assimilated by the field, such as Michel Foucault's radical reconceptualization of power in terms of biopolitics, tend instead to overlook.

Turning to Hall's reading of Gramsci in the 1970s and 1980s also entails a turn toward a particular moment in Western Marxism, when the politics of gender, race, and sexuality as well as new forms of political organizing made a troubling appearance on the theoretical and political horizon of the Left. This is, indeed, the second reason why this chapter engages with Hall's work. Unquestionably, we witness today a "Marxist renaissance" taking place in feminist and queer theory. This theoretical moment is being elicited, on the one hand, by the economic crisis exploded in 2008 and, on the other hand, by the rearticulation of progressive sexual politics to the politico-economic project of neoliberalism. The current reencounter between queer theory and Marxism informs my own reflections in this dissertation. However, there is a tendency of fetishizing the many "turns" that keep reorienting theoretical work. Any such "turn"—be it a turn back or a turn forward—must be approached with some sense of its history. Looking at Hall's work in the 1970s and 1980s can help us think through the relation between Marxism and identity politics: a relation that has been both troubled *and* fertile, and that we shall approach in all its complexity if we are not to invoke a "return to Marxism" in a purely rhetorical manner today.

In this respect, thinking with Hall is productive precisely to the extent that neither the relation between Hall and Marxism nor the one between

Marxism and cultural studies was ever just an “easy fit.” Colin Sparks (1996) reconstructs the trajectory of Marxism within cultural studies and argues that, from its very inception, the field emerged through “a move away from, and critique of, the established marxist tradition of cultural theory embodied in the writing of authors who were members of the British Communist Party and its international affiliates” (72). In fact, he goes as far as to state that the version of cultural studies that began to develop at the CCCS in its early phase, before 1968, was “one in which the explicit legacy of marxism was more or less absent” (80). This claim is overstated. While the reality of Stalinism and the general political climate of the 1950s and 1960s may have pushed some critics to dismiss Marxism altogether, what marked the emergence of cultural studies was a “struggle” with Marxism rather than its absence. The cultural studies that took shape at the CCCS came into existence within the context of what Hall has termed the “first New Left” (Hall 2010). This critical Left was profoundly marked by the historical turning point of 1956, that is, on the one hand by the Russian repression of the Hungarian revolution, on the other hand by the British, French, and Israeli involvement in the conflict over the Suez Canal zone. Its original gesture was a critique of imperialism and a rejection of Soviet socialism, *not* of Marxism as such.

Sparks continues by affirming that only after 1968 did Marxism properly appear in Birmingham, now mediated by French structuralism (Sparks 1996, 82-83). According to this reading—which problematically obliterates the presence of Marxism within cultural studies from the very beginning, yet helps stressing the complex relation between the two—the Marxism that was first introduced at the CCCS, especially through Hall’s reception of Althusser, was one suspicious of economic determinism and attentive to the problem of ideology. But this was not a smooth encounter either. Hall once employed the metaphor of “wrestling” to describe his own encounter with Althusser’s Marxism (Hall 1992a, 280). Therefore, Sparks argues, even the merge between cultural studies and *this* Marxism did not last long. According to his account, Hall (and cultural studies at large) soon took a road away from Marx mediated by the reading of Gramsci and especially by the work of Laclau. In Sparks’ view, Laclau significantly weakened the “rigours” of Althusser’s Marxism by rejecting the principle of the “determination by the economic in the last instance” and by affirming that ideological elements (such as nationalism) do not possess any necessary class belonging, but derive their progressive or conservative

character from the very processes of their contingent articulation within particular ideological formations (Sparks 1996, 89-92).

Sparks may be right: to a certain extent, Marxism has been a transitory moment in Hall's theoretical trajectory. However, if the theoretical encounter with Gramsci may have been the driving force leading Hall *away* from Marxism, it is because Gramsci represented indeed a rupture, yet *within* Marxism: first and foremost, with the economic reductionism of "orthodox" Marxism. It may be true that Gramsci's rupture (and especially the interpretation of that rupture offered by Laclau) opened up a path that subsequently led Hall elsewhere, but it is equally true that in the 1970s and 1980s Hall needed this kind of rupture in order to sustain his engagement with Marxist theorizing. For, as he once put it, "I came into marxism backwards: against the Soviet tanks in Budapest, as it were" (Hall 1992a, 279).<sup>13</sup> To this, we shall add Hall's commitment to the emerging identity politics of race, gender, and sexuality. Such antagonisms, too, represented a rupture—both theoretically and politically—within Marxism and the Left. Hall made an effort to *think through* that rupture in order to understand his "New Times." If a contemporary "Marxist renaissance" in queer theory is not to take place only rhetorically, Hall's theoretical effort is worth recovering.

But it is also the particular conjuncture to which Hall directed his attention in the 1970s and 1980s that makes his reading of Gramsci extremely valuable today. One of the main goals of Hall's intervention at the time was to understand not only the rise of Thatcherism, but a shifting of the very terrain on which Thatcherism was managing to consolidate its ascendancy. In other words, Hall was centrally concerned with Thatcherism's ability to occupy a politico-ideological terrain that the Left, instead, proved unable or even reluctant to articulate to its own socialist project. This is the terrain of identity politics, defined by antagonisms other than class conflict. Hall found Gramsci's conceptualization of hegemony—which prioritizes the construction of broad political alliances and foregrounds the "superstructures of civil society" as key sites of politico-ideological struggle—particularly useful to address the challenges faced by the Left in that political phase. To be sure, there are profound differences between our times and Hall's "New Times." Hall warned that if the Left failed to open up its language and programs to new forms of antagonism, the terrain of identity politics was going to be articulated by Thatcherism along *conservative* lines, for the consolidation of white and heteropatriarchal

norms and privileges. The shifts rightward in contemporary *progressive* sexual politics pose quite a different set of questions.<sup>14</sup> Thus, Hall's approach to the particular conjuncture of Thatcherism does not lend itself as a recipe to understand our times and to answer our questions. Rather, his reading of Gramsci can provide us today, three to four decades later, with the tools to ask the right kind of questions. In other words, I propose to think with Hall not just on the terrain of theory, but also on the terrain of theoretical *practice*.

As I highlight throughout the chapter, Hall used to measure his proximities and distances from key interlocutors such as Laclau and Althusser by relentlessly testing their conceptual apparatuses—as well as his own—before the tribunal of Thatcherism. Indeed, he regarded theoretical practice as obliquely and precariously positioned between theory and the concrete. In his view, the production of theoretical concepts always maintains a degree of relative autonomy from the concrete that such concepts aim to appropriate, yet he never conceded that a full demarcation exists between the two. The problem of theoretical practice always remained for Hall a theoretical problem in its own right—a problem inspired by Marx and Gramsci. Although there may be no absolute consensus within cultural studies on how to work through this problem, its acknowledgment came to define the field as a whole. Jennifer Daryl Slack observes: “Cultural studies resists thinking in terms of the ‘application’ of theory. . . . In place of that conception of theory, cultural studies works with the notion of theory as a ‘detour’ to help ground our engagement with what newly confronts us and to let that engagement provide the ground for retheorizing” (Slack 1996, 114). In other words, cultural studies works with the notion of theory itself as a practice informed, in turn, by other cultural, social, and political practices.

In “Marx's Notes on Method” ([1974] 2003), Hall addresses at length the problem of theoretical practice while offering some key observations on Marx's epistemology. Here, he carefully differentiates between empiricism and what he regards as Marx's epistemology of the concrete, arguing that the concrete is *not* the empirically-given (129). Theory, Hall observes, does not start from the empirically-given in order to produce an adequate and transparent representation of it. Rather, theoretical practice produces a “concrete-in-thought” that must *reconstruct* the “concrete-in-history,” yet maintaining a degree of relative autonomy from the concrete that it appropriates.<sup>15</sup> In other words, theoretical practice “must ‘rise from

the abstract to the concrete' not vice versa" (131). It should not observe the empirically-given and produce concepts able to represent it by way of generalization and abstraction, looking for a common essence behind a field of concrete differences. On the contrary, theoretical practice must produce concepts able to appropriate the concrete while preserving its differences and determinations through the very process of appropriation. According to Hall, "the method which Marx proposes in the *Introduction* . . . is a method which groups, not a simple 'essence' behind the different historical forms, but precisely the many determinations in which 'essential differences' are preserved" (120). This is why "we need concepts . . . which *differentiate* in the very moment that they reveal hidden connections" (118).

Hall's theoretical practice is central to his reading of Gramsci in the 1970s and 1980s: a reading mediated by the concrete conjuncture of Thatcherism. Furthermore, it partly explains the very fascination that Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* ([1929-1935] 1971)<sup>16</sup> exercised on him. Fragmented and never recomposed into a fully systematized political theory, written in the 1930s while Gramsci was incarcerated by the Fascist regime and not always with primary sources at his disposal, the *Prison Notebooks* confront their reader with a work in progress rather than a closed system of thought. For similar reasons, Hall always preferred the earlier and more tentative writings by contemporaries such as Laclau and Althusser over their later works. In Hall's words: "I still prefer [Laclau's] *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* over [Laclau and Mouffe's] *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. . . . I prefer *The Eighteen Brumaire* to book II of *Capital*. I prefer Althusser's *For Marx* to *Reading Capital*. I like people's middle period a lot, where . . . their thought has not yet hardened into a system" (Hall 1986c, 56). It thus comes as little surprise that Hall's own work is characterized by a fragmentary style. On the one hand, he was essentially a writer of essays rather than books, and the philosophical concepts put at work in one piece may be submitted to compelling critique in the next, if a shift of the question required it. On the other hand, his writings often formed part of broader collective enterprises, lacking the precise contours of conventional authorship.

Therefore, it is also for tactical reasons that I focus on the debates between Hall and some of his privileged interlocutors, for these exchanges can help us better situate Hall's own thinking—in spite of, yet preserving, its fragmentariness. In the next section, I begin to reconstruct Hall's reading of Gramsci mainly by confronting it with the reading offered

by Laclau and Mouffe in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* ([1985] 2001). Laclau and Mouffe share with Hall a fundamental theoretical and political commitment: a rethinking of Marxist categories in the face of the appearance of new social movements and identity politics on the horizon of the Left. Yet, as I argue, their respective readings of Gramsci in “New Times” diverge on the terrain of theoretical practice. While Laclau and Mouffe try to identify in Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* the formulation of a whole new political logic, Hall recovers Gramsci’s reflections first and foremost in order to carry out a conjunctural analysis of the concrete social and political transformations of his time.

*Thinking Hegemony: Reading Gramsci in “New Times”*

Central to Gramsci’s theorizing, and to Hall’s recovery of it in the 1970s and 1980s, is the concept of “hegemony.” In his famous essay “Gramsci’s Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity” (1986a), Hall observes that the conceptualization of hegemony in Gramsci’s work must be understood in relation to his “rigorous attack on all vestiges of ‘economism’ and ‘reductionism’ within classical marxism” (10). The term “economism” polemically denotes a form of theoretical reductionism that posits the economic base of a given society—the mode of production—as its only structure of determination. According to this view, which its critics associate in particular with the orthodox version of Marxism canonized at the time of the Second International,<sup>17</sup> the levels other than the economic (the political and the ideological) stand in a relation of pure reflection and immediate correspondence to the economic base and do not possess any structuring force of their own. For Hall, it is against this political and theoretical background that Gramsci’s work in general, and his conceptualization of hegemony in particular, need to be approached.

Gramsci understood the exercise of power by a dominant class in liberal societies to depend on the capacity of that class to forge a “hegemonic bloc”: a composite formation able to integrate, in part, the interests of different social forces and class fractions. This process is mediated by politico-ideological practices, so that the latter do not just reflect the economic structure, as the logic of economism would suggest, but play an active and central role in the structuring of the social totality. To put it differently, economism would posit that power is exercised in any capitalist society

by the ruling class, and that all political and ideological apparatuses in that society—first and foremost, the state—simply reflect and preserve ruling class interests. The notion of a hegemonic bloc displaces this economistic reading, for it suggests that the exercise of power in liberal societies fundamentally depends on the possibility of partly integrating and mediating the interests of heterogeneous social segments. A “gap” is introduced between the economic base and the concrete shape of society which signals the theoretical (and political) insufficiencies of economism.

In order to discern what Gramsci did offer in place of economism, Hall turns to the Althusserian distinction between “mode of production” and “social formation” (Althusser [1965] 1969; Althusser and Balibar [1968] 1970). While the mode of production refers to the economic base of a given society but constitutes, importantly, an *analytic abstraction*, the concept of social formation indicates, in Hall’s words, that “societies are necessarily complexly structured totalities, with different levels of articulation (the economic, the political, the ideological instances) in different combinations” (Hall 1986a, 12). The concept of “articulation” appearing in this passage, in turn, is central to Hall’s understanding of hegemony. In theory, articulation signals the opening of a gap between the mode of production and the social formation, hence the necessity to leave economism behind. In practice, articulation is the work performed by politics and ideology: the closing of that gap through contingent fixes that determine the concrete shape of a social formation at a given historical juncture.

In “Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance” (1980), Hall provides a brief genealogy of the concept of articulation in contemporary Marxist theory. Here, he observes that, although its meaning remains vague and open to different appropriations, the concept finds in Althusser’s work an unquestionable starting point: “No clear consensus of conceptual definition can be said to have emerged so far. Yet it remains the site of a significant theoretical rupture (*coupure*) and intervention. This is the intervention principally associated with the work of Althusser and the ‘school’ of structuralist Marxism” (324). According to Hall’s reading, the concept of articulation describes a link among elements of a social formation that are neither immediately reflexive of one another nor linked spontaneously: the link must be actively established. The critic’s task is to identify and expose the articulatory practices, for “no ‘necessary correspondence’ or expressive homology can be assumed as given” (325). However, Althusser deploys the concept of articulation primarily to account

for the combinations of different modes of production within the same social formation. Thus, Hall argues that Althusser's use of the concept must be supplemented with other theorizations, if one is to track not only the articulatory practices producing structured combinations of different modes of production, but also those operating across the different levels of the economic, the political, and the ideological: "Here, the work of Althusser, and of the 'Althusserians' . . . requires to be supplemented by the work of . . . Gramsci" (331). It is in Gramsci that Hall finds a conceptualization of the articulatory work performed by political and ideological practices. According to Hall, turning one's attention to the social formation and the articulatory practices producing it as a structured totality, as Gramsci did, means leaving the terrain of abstraction in favor of concrete and historically grounded analyses. As Gramsci himself puts it in his *Prison Notebooks*, economism "must be contested in theory as primitive infantilism, and combated in practice with the authentic testimony of Marx, the author of concrete political and historical works" (Gramsci [1929-1935] 1971, 407).

From this critique of economism did Gramsci's conceptualization of hegemony emerge, hand-in-hand with a rethinking of the classical Marxist base-superstructure metaphor. He writes in the *Prison Notebooks*: "It is the problem of the relations between structure and superstructure which must be accurately posed if the forces which are active in the history of a particular period are to be correctly analysed and the relations between them determined" (Gramsci [1929-1935] 1971, 177). More specifically, Gramsci considers the "superstructures of civil society" (the school, the church, the institutions of cultural production, and so forth) to be key sites for the accumulation and exercise of power, not mere by-products of the economic base.<sup>18</sup> In other words, the forging of consent is not secondary, but central to domination. The political and ideological formations that secure consent to power are not just a transparent reflection of the economic structure, but they substantially contribute to shape and preserve that structure. The concept of hegemony, in the *Prison Notebooks*, is meant to name this reconceptualization of power and to profile, accordingly, the contours of a new political practice. In Gramsci's view, in order to confront and displace the existing hegemonic bloc, a new "historical bloc" must take shape that cannot but operate in the first place on the dispersed terrain of civil society: practicing, indeed, a politics of hegemony.

Gramsci deployed a well-known warfare metaphor in order to formulate his understanding of hegemony as a key terrain for communist

politics in the twentieth century. He argued that the advent of trench warfare in World War I—and the partial replacement, at least on a strategic level, of frontal attack—was paralleled, in Western Europe at his time, by a similar shift in the political field: from a “war of movement” oriented toward the direct seizing of state power, to a “war of position” attentive to the multiple sites of power distributed across increasingly complex civil societies. Again from the *Prison Notebooks*:

The superstructures of civil society are like the trench-systems of modern warfare. In war it would sometimes happen that a fierce artillery attack seemed to have destroyed the enemy’s entire defensive system, whereas in fact it had only destroyed the outer perimeter; and at the moment of their advance and attack the assailants would find themselves confronted by a line of defense which was still effective. . . . Hence it is a question of studying “in depth” which elements of civil society correspond to the defensive systems in a war of position. (Gramsci [1929-1935] 1971, 235)

It is not difficult to see why such a reconceptualization, *within* Marxism, of the relations between base and superstructures appealed to Hall. In the late 1970s and through the 1980s, Hall became increasingly preoccupied not only with the rise of Thatcherism, but also with the role played in that conjuncture by the crisis of the Left and its failure to understand the emergence of new identity politics and social movements, such as feminism, gay liberation, and Black Power. As he and Martin Jacques observe in the introduction to *The Politics of Thatcherism* (1983), while the Left did not let its language and programs be transformed by these “new social forces and movements,” Thatcherism avoided committing the same mistake (14). The latter occupied that terrain “with its attention to the centrality of women’s domestic role, the policing of black communities and the frontal engagement with the peace movement” (14). That is, Thatcherism filled a space left vacant by the Left, absorbing into its political project a number of emerging social antagonisms that, needless to say, it articulated rightward. By doing so, Thatcherism also “allowed many of these contradictory forces and pressures to play more freely into the political backyard of the left and the labour movement, precipitating its own fracturing and internal crisis” (15). Gramsci’s call to identify the elements of civil society that correspond to the defensive systems in a war of position provided Hall

with the lens to diagnose this particular triangulation between the rise of Thatcherism, a crisis of the British Left, and the emergence of new social movements and identity politics.

The understanding of hegemony in terms of war of position, which Hall recovers and reactivates in the 1970s and 1980s, is the one to be found in the *Prison Notebooks*. However, this is neither the first time Gramsci deployed the concept nor the first time the concept appeared on the scene of Marxist theorizing. In “The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci” (1977), one of the most influential English texts to provide a close reading of the *Prison Notebooks* at the time of Hall’s writing,<sup>19</sup> Perry Anderson traces a genealogy of hegemony, beginning with the emergence of the concept in Russian Social Democracy. It is worth recalling this genealogy, if briefly, because the different reconceptualizations that the concept underwent help further explain not only how Hall received the concept, but also what made its appropriation in the context of Thatcherism so compelling. Anderson writes:

The term *gegemoniya* (hegemony) was one of the most central political slogans in the Russian Social-Democratic movement, from the 1890s to 1917. The idea which it codified first started to emerge in the writings of Plekhanov in 1883-4, where he urged the imperative necessity for the Russian working class to wage a political struggle against Tsarism, not merely an economic struggle against its employers. (P. Anderson 1977, 15)

Plekhanov thought so, Anderson observes, because in his view “the bourgeoisie in Russia was still too weak to take the initiative in the struggle against absolutism: the organized working class would have to take up the demands of a bourgeois-democratic revolution” (P. Anderson 1977, 15). The concept of hegemony was to be taken up by other Russian Social-Democrats and later by Lenin, in his essay “What Is To Be Done?” ([1902] 1961). Subject to some variations, it ended up circulating in a number of documents produced by the Third International, which presumably effected the transmission of the concept to Gramsci (P. Anderson 1977, 18). Yet at this point, through Lenin’s reading, hegemony had come to name not only the process by which a class (the proletariat) takes up the “historical task” of another class due to historical contingency (leading a democratic revolution that the Russian bourgeoisie was not ready to carry

out), but also the mechanism by which the proletariat would establish, in the process, its political leadership over other class fractions such as the peasantry, hence forging a system of class alliances. This inflection of hegemony, of Leninist provenance, is the one to be found at work in Gramsci's "Some Aspects of the Southern Question" ([1926] 1978), the famous essay predating the *Prison Notebooks*. Here, Gramsci deploys the concept for the first time in order to address a question of political strategy: how to forge an alliance between the proletariat of the Italian North and the peasantry of the South against the capitalist state.

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* ([1985] 2001), Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe take up the genealogy traced by Anderson in order to argue that Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* represent a fundamental break not only with Marxist economism, but also with previous Marxist conceptualizations of hegemony. For Laclau and Mouffe, the problem of hegemony had been formulated before Gramsci only on strictly pragmatic grounds, in ways that did not fundamentally displace the underlying logic of economism. As they point out, in the early writings of Russian Social-Democrats "the concept of hegemony fills a space left vacant by a crisis of what, according to Plekhanov's 'stagist' conception, should have been a normal historical development" (48). Thus, the economic principle is kept in place according to which historical progress proceeds through necessary "stages" and the passage from one stage to the other is carried out by a particular class whose historical task is determined by its location within the mode of production. With hegemony being considered as nothing but an *exceptional supplement* to this logic, the logic itself is not transformed. Indeed, as Laclau and Mouffe observe, "none of the Russian Social Democratic analyses suggests that bourgeois tasks cease to be bourgeois when they are assumed by the proletariat. Class identity is constituted on the basis of the relations of production" (50). And, they continue, even when the concept of hegemony develops beyond its Russian Social-Democratic formulations and comes to denote—in Lenin and the Leninist tradition—a system of alliances among different segments of the working population, the hegemonic link continues to be considered as essentially "external" to the subjects it contingently binds together: "In the Leninist conception, the working class and its vanguard do not transform their class identity by fusing it with the multiple democratic demands that are politically recomposed by the hegemonic practices; instead, they regard these demands as stages, as necessary yet transitory steps in pursuit of their

own class objectives” (56). This means that political subjects continue to be understood as ontologically constituted at the level of the mode of production—that is, as bearers of particular class interests—*independently* of politico-ideological practices of recomposition.

In the work of Gramsci, Laclau and Mouffe seek to identify the formulation of a whole new political logic. Similarly to Hall, their key preoccupation is to understand the emergence of new social movements in the 1970s and 1980s organized around axes of antagonism other than class conflict; their main goal is to open up theoretical and political spaces for such movements within the Left, leading to what they term a “radical democratic politics.” For an opening of this kind to take place, Laclau and Mouffe argue that socialist political practice needs to be reconceived through a *full displacement* of economism: that is, beyond the notion of an alliance among subjects defined by their interests and position in the mode of production. Such a full displacement is to be found, in their view, in the conceptual expansion of hegemony carried out by Gramsci in the *Prison Notebooks*: “More than any other theoretician of his time, Gramsci broadened the terrain of political recomposition and hegemony, . . . offering a theorization of the hegemonic link which clearly went beyond the Leninist category of ‘class alliance’” (Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001, 66). According to their analysis, while Lenin deployed the concept of hegemony to name the *political* leadership that the working class had to establish over other class fractions to forge an effective class alliance, the main ingredient of the practice of hegemony becomes, in Gramsci, *intellectual and moral* leadership: “It is in this movement, from the ‘political’ to the ‘intellectual and moral’ plane, that the decisive transition takes place toward a concept of hegemony beyond ‘class alliances’” (66). For Laclau and Mouffe, this is the case because a practice of hegemony based on intellectual and moral leadership requires that the different subjects involved come to share a “collective will,” forging what Gramsci called a “historical bloc.” Thus, these subjects do not enter the relation as fully constituted agents who make a pragmatic use of the hegemonic link in order to pursue their already-defined interests, but are fully transformed by the relation itself.

Both Hall and Laclau and Mouffe embrace the conceptualization of hegemony to be found in the *Prison Notebooks*, for it allows them to prefigure a radical opening of the Left to the emergence of new social movements. However, despite the affinities between their respective political commitments, Hall’s insistence on the relation between theory

and the concrete marks his distance from Laclau and Mouffe's reading of Gramsci in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. According to the latter, Gramsci's intervention departs from previous Marxist conceptualizations of hegemony. But, in order to emphasize the novelty of this turning point in their terms—that is, as the transformation of hegemony from the name of a political strategy into a whole new political logic—Laclau and Mouffe need to locate a point of discontinuity also *within* Gramsci's thought: more specifically, between his earlier essay on the Southern question and the *Prison Notebooks*. They write:

In *Notes on the Southern Question* (1926), the first Gramscian text in which the concept of hegemony is used, he states . . . that the working class should not remain confined to the narrow defence of its corporative interests, but should take up those of other sectors. However, the logic is still only one of preconstituted sectoral interests, which is perfectly compatible with the notion of a class alliance. As in Lenin, leadership is merely political and not “moral and intellectual.” (Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001, 66)

Thus, according to Laclau and Mouffe, it is in the *Prison Notebooks* that one can find a notion of hegemony open to their project of a radical democratic politics. This is due to the significant expansion of the concept, in the later text, beyond its Leninist understanding. In their view, only this expansion allows Gramsci to be read and reactivated in the 1980s in the face of the emergence of new social movements and identity politics on the horizon of Marxism and the Left. For, as I have mentioned, they consider it necessary to dispense with the notions of “alliance” and “interests” if we are to move the politics of hegemony onto a fully non-economistic terrain; that is, if we are to conceptualize the forging of hegemonic links as a process that does not operate externally among already-constituted subjects, but rather transforms the subjects entering the relation and becomes constitutive of the very process of subject formation. But, can such a sharp line of demarcation be drawn between Gramsci's essay on the Southern question and his *Prison Notebooks*?<sup>20</sup>

Note that, in order to locate a radical turning point in the shift from one text to the other, Laclau and Mouffe only quote the following passage from the earlier essay: “The proletariat can become the leading [*dirigente*] and the dominant class to the extent that it succeeds in creating a system of class

alliances which allows it to mobilize the majority of the working population against capitalism and the bourgeois State” (Gramsci [1926] 1978, 443).<sup>21</sup> This selective reference tends to reduce Gramsci’s overall argument to its strategic scope. Yet “Some Aspects of the Southern Question” is far richer a text. Published prior to Gramsci’s imprisonment by the Fascist regime, the essay deploys the concept of hegemony for the first time in order to address the question of how to forge a class alliance between the proletariat of the Italian North and the peasantry of the Italian South against the capitalist state. The most significant obstacle to the emergence of this alliance is identified by Gramsci in the “agrarian bloc” characterizing Italian society at the time: a link between the “disintegrated mass of the peasantry” and the big landowners in the Italian South, secured by the intellectuals of the rural bourgeoisie. The latter are characterized by Gramsci as “democratic in [their] peasant face; reactionary in the face turned towards the big landowner and the government” (454-455). In his view, not only did these Southern intellectuals prevent the peasant masses from organizing their interests against the bourgeoisie, but they were also the leaders of cultural initiatives in Central and Northern Italy hosting those who “sought to leave the agrarian bloc and pose the Southern question in a radical form” (459). In this way, they “detached the radical intellectuals of the South from the peasant masses, forcing them to take part in national and European culture; and through this culture, [they] secured their absorption by the national bourgeoisie and hence by the agrarian bloc” (460).<sup>22</sup>

It is clear that, already in this earlier account of the function of the intellectuals within the Italian agrarian bloc, Gramsci regards the mechanisms of production and circulation of culture, the establishment of moral and intellectual leadership, and the terrain of civil society at large as crucial sites for the organization of relations of force in society. Certainly it makes no sense to entirely contest the reading proposed by Laclau and Mouffe. Hall himself (1986a, 16) does not fail to register that in the *Prison Notebooks* the concept of hegemony undergoes a significant expansion. However, even a quick glance at Gramsci’s analysis of the Southern question and of the role of the intellectuals in the Italian society of the 1920s reveals a stronger continuity between this earlier thematization of hegemony and its subsequent expansion. Laclau and Mouffe trace a line of demarcation between the two texts because they are resolute in expelling the notions of “alliance” and “interests” from their own theory of hegemony. Their goal is to radicalize the claim that the subjects entering

a hegemonic relation are fully transformed by it: those subjects cannot be considered, in their view, as the bearers of interests defined outside the hegemonic relation itself.

Hall, instead, highlights that the notion of hegemony deployed in “Some Aspects of the Southern Question” is “already a theoretically complex and rich formulation” (Hall 1986a, 16).<sup>23</sup> And in his famous essay “The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism among the Theorists” (1988c), in which he measures the hold of different political theories before the tribunal of Thatcherism, Hall makes implicit reference to the work of Laclau and Mouffe and contests the theoretical gesture of dispensing with the notion of “interests” altogether:

Ideologies may not be affixed, as organic entities, to their appropriate classes, but this does not mean . . . that interests . . . have no part in determining the play of ideas within which different groups figure out the world and their role and *allegiances* in it. The problem is that interests are not only not given as an objective feature of a structure of positions in a social system . . . but they change historically. . . . Class is not the only determinant of social interest (e.g., gender, race). . . . What is more, social collectivities have more than one set of interests; and interests can be and frequently are contradictory, even mutually exclusive. (Hall 1988c, 45)

This passage significantly expands the traditional Marxist understanding of interests, yet resists its abandonment. It is worth pausing and reflecting on the difference between the two approaches. Laclau and Mouffe are firm in dispensing with the notions of “class interests” and “class alliance” and in displacing class from the core of socialist politics. While a reading of Gramsci provides them with a point of support to accomplish these moves, they are entirely conscious that their vision of a radical democratic politics significantly departs from Gramsci’s own understanding of hegemony in the 1930s. In order to make room within the Left for the articulation of new antagonisms emerging in the social and political fields in the 1970s and 1980s, Laclau and Mouffe in fact affirm the importance of recovering the basic concepts of Gramsci’s analysis, but “radicalizing” them “in a direction that leads us beyond Gramsci” (Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001, 136). So, what form does such a radicalization take? According to some commentators, Laclau and Mouffe are guilty of having abandoned class

as a category of analysis and the working class as a privileged political subject for the Left. This abandonment granted their theory of hegemony the label of “post-Marxism.”<sup>24</sup> Hall, instead, elaborates a different critique of their theoretical enterprise:

While they are very responsible—whether you agree with them or not—about recognizing that their position does have political consequences, when they come down to particular political conjunctures, they don’t reintegrate other levels of determination into the analysis. Instead, they take the abstractions which have been developed and elaborated, in a very rigorous and conceptual way at the high philosophical level, and insert them into the here and now. You don’t see them adding, adding, adding, the different levels of determination. (Hall 1986c, 58)

Following Hall, I argue that the “radicalization” of Gramscian concepts that Laclau and Mouffe propose in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* is carried out by means of increasing abstraction. Hall’s theoretical practice, instead, which proceeds from his understanding of Marx’s epistemology as well as his reading of Gramsci, suggests that the more complex a social formation, the more concrete shall be the concepts we deploy in order to analyze it (Hall [1974] 2003, 133).<sup>25</sup> The concepts of “alliance” and “interests,” for instance, rather than bearing the mark of the “original sin” of economism, are capable of appropriating the social reality theoretically while preserving its concrete determinations. It is only by multiplying the interests involved in the construction of political alliances, and not by expelling such notions from the analysis, that one can better understand, Hall suggests, the politics of hegemony and counter-hegemony taking root in “New Times.”

As this discussion shows, Hall resists any trading of the concrete for theoretical abstraction. This refusal can be regarded as a quintessential mark of his reading of Gramsci and of his work as a whole. Rather than searching for a new political logic in the *Prison Notebooks*, as Laclau and Mouffe do, Hall’s primary goal is to reactivate Gramsci’s theoretical practice in the particular context of Thatcherism. This means unraveling in theory the concrete differences and determinations that shape the social and political fields, rather than blurring them through the process of theoretical appropriation. This is what happens when Laclau and Mouffe abandon the notions of “alliance” and “interests” altogether in the service of what they

regard as a “radicalization” of the logic of hegemony. And, as I am about to argue, it is also what happens when the concrete boundaries between state and civil society are too quickly blurred or even eclipsed in theory, even as they continue to be fully operative in practice. In the next section, I briefly focus on the problem of how to conceptualize the relation between state and civil society, for this problem is central not only to Gramsci’s theory of hegemony, but also to Hall’s reading of Thatcherism as a form of “authoritarian populism”: a construction of popular consent to a distinctly authoritarian political project.

### *Authoritarian Populism*

For Gramsci, hegemonic blocs in liberal social formations must articulate and mediate the interests of heterogeneous social segments in order to forge a broad base of consent to the exercise of power. This leads him to question the traditional boundaries between state and civil society and to coin the concept of “integral state” encompassing the two. For, if the dominant classes preserve and exercise their power not only by way of coercion, but through a constant manufacturing of consent, how to maintain a sharp distinction between state and civil society? Consider, for instance, Gramsci’s following comments on the concept of “law”: “this concept will have to be extended to include those activities which are at present classified as ‘legally neutral,’ and which belong to the domain of civil society” (Gramsci [1929-1935] 1971, 242). Civil society, he follows, “operates without ‘sanctions’ or compulsory ‘obligations,’ but nevertheless exerts a collective pressure and obtains objective results in the form of an evolution of customs, ways of thinking and acting, morality, etc.” (242).<sup>26</sup> However, this does not mean that Gramsci entirely eclipses the boundaries between state and civil society. In the notion of “integral state,” state and civil society maintain, as Hall would put it, a relation of *articulation*.

Gramsci’s rethinking of the relation between state and civil society and the centrality of the problem of consent to his analysis of state power are central to Hall’s own approach to Thatcherism. Indeed, those elements allow him to understand the *populist* appeal of Thatcherism’s *authoritarian* project, that is, Thatcherism’s consolidation of popular consent—not least through a hegemonization of the terrain of identity—in the service of its authoritarian practices. Hall never suggests that the Thatcherite attempt

to establish a new hegemony relied exclusively on consent. On the contrary, he registers “the increasing reliance on coercive authority and the repressive apparatuses of the state in disciplining the economic and the political struggle, in the context of crisis” (Hall [1980] 1988, 136). Illustrative of this is, for example, the nearly unprecedented deployment of police forces in the management of the 1984-85 miners’ strike, to which I return at the end of this chapter. However, this does not mean that the state simply revealed, under Thatcherism, its “real” determinant element: coercion. Perry Anderson suggests as much when he argues that “the ‘fundamental’ resort of bourgeois class power, beneath the ‘preponderant’ cusp of culture in a parliamentary system, remains coercion” (Anderson 1977, 44).<sup>27</sup> In Hall’s opinion, instead, while a reductionist approach to Thatcherism would certainly be the one offered by economism (which would consider the Thatcherite project to be nothing but a new attempt to secure the interests of the ruling classes), equally reductionist is “to deduce both the form and the outcome of a ‘national crisis’ from some general theory of the capitalist state, and its inherent general tendencies” (Hall [1980] 1988, 129). For him, Thatcherism’s recourse to coercion does not expose the ultimate *nature* of the capitalist state. Rather, he argues that central to Thatcherism and its relative success was precisely a construction of popular consent to the exercise of force: “a dovetailing of the ‘cry for discipline’ from below into the call for an enforced restoration of social order and authority ‘from above’” (137). He terms this articulation of consent *and* coercion: “authoritarian populism.”

As Hall (1985b) recalls, he coined the concept of authoritarian populism upon reading the last section of Nicos Poulantzas’ *State, Power, Socialism* (1978).<sup>28</sup> Here, Poulantzas registers and theorizes a dramatic shift in liberal democratic regimes: an intensification of state control over every sphere of social life and a decline of the institutions of political democracy, at the expense of so-called “civil liberties.” Poulantzas terms this moment “authoritarian statism,” pointing at a rearticulation of the relation between consent and coercion in favor of the coercive pole. Hall’s concept of authoritarian populism is meant to draw on Poulantzas’ analysis while integrating it with an attention to the ideological practices aimed at manufacturing—paradoxically, if you wish—popular *consent* to the *coercive* authoritarianism of Thatcherism. It is primarily to account for the specificities of this particular conjuncture that Hall coins the concept of authoritarian populism, “adopting this deliberately contradictory

term precisely to encapsulate the contradictory features of the emerging conjuncture” (Hall 1985b, 118).

Hall’s replacement of “statism” with “populism” in Poulantzas’ original formulation points to his understanding of the relation between state and civil society. Following Gramsci and his conceptualization of the integral state, Hall argues that state and civil society must always be understood in a relation of articulation. Neither can they be conceptualized as entirely independent from one another, nor can state and civil society be merged without accurately charting the boundaries between the two. The very concept of authoritarian populism (an articulation of consent *and* coercion) would lose any explanatory force if the boundaries between state and civil society were simply eclipsed. Hall puts this argument forward in “The Toad in the Garden” (1988c), while discussing Althusser’s theory of the ideological state apparatuses (Althusser [1970] 1971). On the one hand, he agrees with Althusser that “ideology is always materialized in concrete practices and rituals and operates through specific apparatuses” (Hall 1988c, 46). On the other hand, he contests the proposition that ideological apparatuses be always considered *state* apparatuses:

Althusser would argue that these are all ideological *state* apparatuses . . . by virtue of their function—the function, ascribed to the state, of sustaining the “reproduction of the social relations of production” in and through ideology. What is striking about Thatcherism is precisely its capacity to enter into struggle and win space *in civil society itself*; to use the trenches and fortifications of civil society as the means of forging a considerable ideological and intellectual *authority* outside the realm of the state proper and, indeed, *before*—as a necessary condition to—taking formal power *in* the state. (Hall 1988c, 47)

Therefore, Hall observes, it is a mistake “to collapse the state/civil society distinction as if it were without real or pertinent effects” (Hall 1988c, 48). This would prevent one from understanding, for instance, the moments and modes of emergence of popular consent to the authoritarian practices of the Thatcher governments: that is, the specific articulatory practices presiding over the emergence of a contradictory formation such as authoritarian populism.

That Hall makes this point while commenting on Althusser’s theory of ideology is not accidental. In fact, the problem of ideology became one

of the main terrains on which Hall confronted his key interlocutors in the 1970s and 1980s. In the wake of Gramsci's questioning of the traditional base-superstructure metaphor, Hall adopted a distinctive focus on the ideological practices that secured the increasing ascendancy of Thatcherism. This is how he came to understand Thatcherism in terms of authoritarian populism: refusing to read its recourse to the coercive apparatuses of the state independently from the ideology it deployed to win over popular consent. Moreover, it is precisely this focus on ideology that allowed him to understand the rise of Thatcherism in a triangular relation with the crisis of the Left and the emergence of new social movements and identity politics. Hall insisted that one of the key successes of Thatcherism was its capacity to seize the new politico-ideological terrain of identity politics which the Left, instead, proved unable to read as a site of hegemonic struggle and to occupy on its own terms. Yet, as we shall see, Hall did not limit himself to highlight the key role played by ideological practices in the consolidation of the Thatcherite project. While thinking through Thatcherism, he also made, in turn, a number of original interventions within the broader Marxist debate on ideology.

*The Problem of Ideology (If Two Can Play at the Game)*

The piece in which Hall more thoroughly than anywhere else addresses the problem of ideology is, as its title indicates, "The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees" (1986b). The essay opens by registering the critique directed by some Marxists—among whom Perry Anderson in his *Considerations on Western Marxism* (1976)—against the obsession of Western Marxist theory with "superstructural" questions of ideology and epistemology, at the expense of more "proper" materialist concerns. Hall agrees that a "theoreticist deluge" did in fact take place in Western Marxism, but he also remarks: "The rise to visibility of the problem of ideology has a more objective basis" (Hall 1986b, 29). By "objective basis" he refers, on the one hand, to the changes in the means through which mass consciousness is formed (such as the spread of popular media) and, on the other hand, to the political question of the working class' consent to the modes of its own exploitation in advanced capitalist societies. The challenge, for Hall, is to address both questions without recourse to the notion of "false consciousness." Against an understanding of ideology as

mere false representation producing false consciousness, at the beginning of the essay he offers a first redefinition of the concept:

By ideology I mean the mental frameworks—the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation—which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works. (Hall 1986b, 29)

This does not mean that the functioning of ideology is limited to the emergence of a coherent set of representations, for Hall immediately follows: “The problem of ideology . . . concerns the ways in which ideas of different kinds . . . become a ‘material force’” (Hall 1986b, 29). Thus, ideology is the result of *both* the condensation of heterogeneous elements into a seemingly coherent discourse *and* the capacity of the latter to articulate a field of social forces. Importantly, ideology here does not simply name the mechanism by which the ruling classes secure their power over the dominated and the exploited. Rather, Hall understands ideology as a practice that *any* class or social group deploys in order to make sense of its position in society, and that possesses a capacity to mobilize social forces as political subjects. As such, it constitutes a terrain of struggle that, in Hall’s view, the Left should occupy on its own terms. As he puts it elsewhere, “in the arena of ideological struggle . . . two can play at the game” (Hall [1980] 1988, 140).

If this is a notion of ideology adequate to his “New Times,” Hall rightly observes that its formulation is not to be found in the writings of Marx himself, since the latter “most often used ‘ideology’ to refer specifically to the manifestations of bourgeois thought; and above all to its negative and distorted features” (Hall 1986b, 30).<sup>29</sup> However, rather than rejecting the concept of ideology deployed by Marx because of its economic premises—the premise according to which ideas unilaterally reflect the material conditions of their emergence and the assumption of a necessary correspondence between ruling ideas and ruling classes—Hall attempts to reread Marx himself, in search of an alternative understanding of the concept. In order to do so, he focuses on Marx’s approach to the ideology of market exchange.

Hall argues that for Marx, on the one hand, market exchange “is what appears to govern and regulate economic processes under capitalism” (Hall

1986b, 34). In other words, liberal explanations of capitalism depict market exchange as its regulating logic: one can sell and buy products, as well as labor force, among equals. Moreover, market exchange also “appears” in a more literal sense, because the experience many of us primarily have of capitalism is reducible to that of a market place—that is, if one is not personally involved in the production moment of the capitalist circuit. Thus, market exchange is the “surface” of capitalism, which conceals the whole set of social relations of exploitation necessary to capitalist production. On the other hand, market exchange acquires the profile of an ideological formation not only by “appearing” to us as the essence of capitalism, but also by extending its logic to all the other spheres of social life. Hall quotes Marx on this matter:

This sphere . . . within whose boundaries the sale and purchase power of labour-power goes on, is in fact a very Eden of the innate rights of man. There alone rule Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham. Freedom, because both buyer and seller of a commodity, say of labour-power, are constrained only by their own free will. . . . Equality, because each enters into relation with the other, as with a simple owner of commodities, and they exchange equivalent for equivalent. Property, because each disposes only of what is his own. And Bentham, because each looks only to himself. (Marx [1867] 1967, 176)<sup>30</sup>

Thus, according to Marx’s account, the bourgeois categories that regulate our entire social life—freedom, equality, property, and individualism—emanate from the logic of market relations. As such, they bear the mark of an inaugural gesture of concealment, because only the concealment of social relations of exploitation allows market exchange to appear as the regulating logic of capitalism in the first place (the buyer and seller of labor force, of course, neither enter the relation as equals nor exchange equivalent for equivalent). As Hall observes, this reading is exemplary of the concept of ideology as generally attributed to Marx: ideology as a set of “false” ideas hiding the “real” relations of exploitation and securing the power of the ruling classes over the exploited. The consent that the latter may grant to such ideas is to be explained only as an instance of false consciousness. In order to reach a different understanding of ideology, Hall rereads this very Marxist reading.

As Hall points out, the falseness—of both the ideology of market

exchange and of the consciousness of the exploited who may consent to it—arises “not from the fact that the market is an illusion, a trick, a sleight-of-hand, but only in the sense that it is an *inadequate* explanation of a process” (Hall 1986b, 37). The explanation is inadequate because it metonymically reduces the capitalist circuit as a whole to one of its moments. In light of this reading, it is not the real/false pair that shall frame our understanding of ideology: “The market is no more or less ‘real’ than other aspects—production for example” (37). It is thus misleading to simply deem any given ideological formation “false.” Rather, one should engage in the analytic work of unpacking its mechanisms of metonymic substitution, for only this can allow us to identify the concrete ground on which every ideology installs itself. There can be a number of different discourses that *do make sense*, in different ways, of the same set of social relations. Given that such discourses are not merely true or false, the ideological field emerges as an open terrain of contestation to be sized and occupied, rather than dismissed in the name of “truth.” This is, indeed, one of the major critiques that Hall formulated against the Left in the 1980s, and even one of the lessons that the Left, in his view, must have drawn from Thatcherism (see Hall and Jacques 1983).

Hall’s privileging of the ideological level in analyzing Thatcherism and its successes granted him a number of critiques. In an essay published on *New Left Review*, for instance, Bob Jessop, Kevin Bonnett, Simon Bromley, and Tom Ling (1984) criticize Hall’s concept of authoritarian populism for what they regard as Hall’s “apparent celebration of Thatcherism” (33). Yet Hall’s emphasis on the ideological level was meant precisely to profile a terrain of struggle for the Left, if the latter was not simply to witness the increasing consolidation of Thatcherite hegemony. More to the point, and apart from this polemic, Jessop *et al.* also criticize Hall’s “ideologism”: his tendency of countering economic reductionism with an equally reductionist focus on the ideological level alone. Yet, as Hall (1985b) remarks in his response to their critique, his concept of authoritarian populism was never meant to offer a *general theory* of Thatcherism. More modestly, it set out to understand its politics of hegemony because the latter remained, in his view, a terrain overlooked by the Left. If the concept of hegemony, as formulated by Gramsci and developed by many of his readers, introduced the problem of the exploited classes’ consent to the mode of their exploitation at the core of the Western Left, Hall aimed to understand, in the more concrete conjuncture of his time, the popular consent gained by Thatcherism in support of its markedly authoritarian political project. To *this*

aspect of the conjuncture Hall's theorizing contributed the most.

Also Jorge Larraín (1991) focuses on the question of ideology in his critique of Hall's approach to Thatcherism. However, while Jessop *et al.* lament the emphasis on ideology as such, Larraín's critique is circumscribed to the *particular notion* of ideology deployed by Hall. Larraín distinguishes between a "neutral" and a "negative" (or "critical") notion of ideology. According to him, the neutral notion adopted by Hall, "of Gramscian, Althusserian and Laclauian inspiration" (2), refers to any articulated discourse of a class, party, or social group—a discourse that carries, indeed, no necessary negative connotation. The negative or critical notion, instead, understands ideology as a process of inversion and distortion of reality meant to secure the interests of the dominant classes. This is the notion of ideology that Larraín defends and that is to be found, he emphasizes, in the work of Marx himself. Although he fails to appreciate that the so-called neutral notion of ideology is no less critical than the negative one, Larraín is certainly correct in identifying these different approaches. And equally correct is to locate, in this regard, Hall, Gramsci, Althusser, and Laclau within the same theoretical camp. However, this should not obscure the relevant differences among these theorists.<sup>31</sup> As we are about to see, when it comes to think through the concrete conjuncture of Thatcherism, Hall accords to Gramsci's understanding of ideology an efficacy that he in part denies, instead, to both Althusser and Laclau.

Hall's debt toward Laclau's work on ideology is of great significance. In *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (1977), which predates *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau firmly locates at the core of his theoretical edifice the principle according to which ideological elements do not possess any necessary class belonging. Here, Laclau disagrees with Poulantzas' argument, formulated in *Fascism and Dictatorship* (1974), according to which different ideological elements (such as nationalism, militarism, racism, and so forth) are determined by their belonging to a given class, and thus ideology is to be analyzed by "break[ing] it down into its constitutive *elements* according to their belonging" (Laclau 1977, 93). Laclau proposes an opposite approach to the problem of ideology:

I think the correct method is the reverse: *to accept that ideological "elements" taken in isolation have no necessary class connotation, and that this connotation is only the result of the articulation of those elements in a concrete ideological discourse.* (Laclau 1977, 99)

The principle according to which ideological elements lack a necessary class belonging, and their position within certain ideological discourses entirely depends on their contingent articulation, is put at work, in the last two essays of *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, not to affirm that such elements thus constitute “floating signifiers” navigating an overflowing discursive field, but to engage in a historically grounded discussion in order to analyze their articulation within particular political projects. Laclau’s concrete reference in this earlier work is Latin American social formations and, more specifically, the phenomenon of Peronism in Argentina. The latter’s strong appeal to both nationalism and socialism explains Laclau’s resoluteness in questioning the necessary class belongingness of ideological elements—countering Poulantzas’ proposition that nationalism always constitutes a bourgeois ideological element (Laclau 1977, 96-99).<sup>32</sup> As Jennifer Daryl Slack puts it, “in *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, Laclau engages in the play of theorizing the concrete in terms of articulation and theorizing articulation in terms of the concrete, principally in terms of Latin American politics” (Slack 1996, 119).

The principle of the non-necessary class belongingness of ideological elements, which Laclau develops by drawing on the Althusserian notion of “ideological interpellation” (Althusser [1970] 1971), is preserved in Laclau’s subsequent work with Mouffe. For Laclau and Mouffe, as much as for Hall, the acknowledgment of the contingency governing the social and political fields works not only as a starting point for a transformation of the Left, but also as a warning. Referring to the popular support gained by Thatcherism in the 1980s, Laclau and Mouffe observe:

There is . . . no subject—nor, further, any “necessity”—which is absolutely radical and irrecuperable by the dominant order, and which constitutes an absolutely guaranteed point of departure for a total transformation. . . . That the forms of resistance to new forms of subordination are polysemic and can perfectly well be articulated into an anti-democratic discourse, is clearly demonstrated by the advances of the “new right” in recent years. . . . Popular support for the Reagan and Thatcher projects of dismantling the Welfare State is explained by the fact that they have succeeded in mobilizing against the latter a whole series of resistances to the bureaucratic character of the new forms of state organization. (Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001, 169-170)

The same point holds, according to Laclau and Mouffe, for the antagonisms articulated by new social movements around issues of race, gender, sexuality, ecology, and so forth. In their view, “every antagonism, left free to itself, is a floating signifier, a ‘wild’ antagonism which does not predetermine the form in which it can be articulated to other elements in a social formation” (Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001, 171). And—entirely coinciding, in this respect, with Hall’s diagnosis of the triangulation between the rise of Thatcherism, a crisis of the Left, and the emergence of identity politics—they direct their critique against the Left itself: “The Left, of course, is ill prepared to take into account these struggles, which even today it tends to dismiss as ‘liberal.’ Hence the danger that they may be articulated by a discourse of the Right, of the defence of privileges” (164).

Thus, for Laclau and Mouffe, the antagonisms embodied by the new social movements shall not be assumed to align with a progressive socialist politics, but rather should be articulated *as* a progressive political project by inserting them in what they term a “chain of equivalence.” In the preface to the second edition of their work, they state:

One of the central tenets of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* is the need to create a chain of equivalence among the various democratic struggles against different forms of subordination. We argued that struggles against sexism, racism, sexual discrimination, and in defence of the environment needed to be articulated with those of the workers in a new left-wing hegemonic project. (Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001, xviii)

The concept of chain of equivalence is Laclau and Mouffe’s way of renaming the alliance that different social and political forces should establish in order to conduct a politics of hegemony and thus forge a new historical bloc able to confront and displace the hegemonic bloc. As I have argued earlier, Laclau and Mouffe do away with the notion of alliance altogether, because the latter designates, in their view, a relation among subjects constituted outside the relation itself. This is why they introduce the discursively inflected concept of chain of equivalence. According to them, a chain of equivalence is a relation that articulates different elements and tends to dissolve their specificity: feminism *stands for* antiracism *stands for* gay and lesbian politics *stands for* the anti-war movement *stands for* the labor movement, and so forth.<sup>33</sup> In this way, the construction of a chain

of equivalence polarizes the social into two different camps and fosters the emergence of a front of antagonism—for instance, the antagonism between a front of the progressive Left and the hegemonic bloc of Thatcherism. The theoretical goal is to conceptualize antagonism itself not as the source, but as the *effect* of politico-ideological articulatory practices.

According to Laclau and Mouffe—who operate here at a level of theoretical abstraction increasingly removed from the concreteness of social and political struggle—the polarization of the social obtained through the construction of a chain of equivalence cannot be stabilized once and for all, otherwise the result would be a final closure that leaves no room for further articulations. Rather, in their view, antagonism works as a *constitutive limit* to the social’s full closure and is, in turn, constantly limited by the differences of the elements that are articulated in a chain of equivalence. The differences that distinguish feminism *from* antiracism *from* gay and lesbian politics, and so forth, prevent the final stabilization of a specific frontier within the social, for this would require a relation of perfect equivalence among those elements. Laclau and Mouffe argue that each element of a chain of equivalence is “split”: it maintains its difference while, at the same time, it embodies the chain as a whole. For them, in fact, this is the place of the universal—a universal contaminated by differences:

Social actors occupy differential positions within the discourses that constitute the social fabric. In that sense they are all, strictly speaking, particularities. On the other hand, there are social antagonisms creating internal frontiers within society. *Vis-à-vis* oppressive forces, for instance, a set of particularities establish relations of equivalence between themselves. It becomes necessary, however, to represent the totality of the chain. . . . What are the means of representation? As we argue, only one particularity whose body is split, for without ceasing to be its own particularity, it transforms its body in the representation of the universality transcending it (that of the equivalential chain). (Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001, xiii)

And they follow: “This relation, by which a certain particularity assumes the representation of a universality entirely incommensurable with it, is what we call a *hegemonic relation*” (Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001, xiii). In other words, a hegemonic relation is for them a relation that articulates different elements into a chain of equivalence so that their differences are not

entirely dissolved, but are limited by the fact that each element represents the chain as a whole. Since feminist struggles, antiracist struggles, gay and lesbian struggles, and so forth are not necessarily bound to a progressive political project—a principle that Laclau and Mouffe draw from Laclau’s earlier conceptualization of the non-necessary class belongingness of ideological elements and extend, now, to the new social movements—they must be articulated in a chain by virtue of which each of these struggles, without losing its autonomy, *stands for* the chain as a whole.

However, despite the continuities between Laclau’s earlier work and *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, what gets almost entirely lost in the latter is precisely the concrete. While Laclau and Mouffe’s work is disseminated with few examples meant to explain the political significance of their theoretical intervention—and many of such examples are drawn from the context of Thatcherism—they do not theorize *through* Thatcherism, but use it to *illustrate* their theoretical edifice. As Judith Butler argues in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality* against both Laclau’s and especially Slavoj Žižek’s deployment of examples in their respective theoretical works, “the very possibility of illustrating an abstract point by a concrete example presupposes the separation of the abstract and the concrete—indeed, presupposes the production of an epistemic field defined by that binary opposition” (Butler 2000, 19). This is, in fact, one of the reasons why Hall preferred Laclau’s earlier work to *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (Hall 1986c, 56).

Symptomatic of Laclau and Mouffe’s failure to think through the concrete are, on the one hand, the radical discursive turn they embrace and, on the other hand, their indifference to history when it comes to conceptualize the mechanisms and the effects of ideology. In order to radicalize their claim that the subjects entering a hegemonic relation are fully transformed by it, Laclau and Mouffe propose that ideology be considered as a fully discursive practice. This does not mean that ideology, in their view, is a discourse operating onto a non-discursive terrain. More radically, and developing a poststructuralist reading of Gramsci, they contest the very distinction between the discursive and the non-discursive. Social forces of different kind, to the extent that they emerge as such and get articulated to one another through ideological work, must be considered as discursive elements that do not possess any determination other than the position they are ascribed by and within ideology itself.<sup>34</sup> This theoretical move is politically informed: its aim is to displace the assumption of an

already-constituted historical subject (the working class) from the core of the Left, in favor of an opening toward new social movements and identity formations. The latter must be transformed—as much as they should transform the Left—through the process of their articulation within a common political project. In Laclau and Mouffe’s view, to maintain that such new formations as well as the working class emerge *outside* and *before* their articulation on the discursive terrain of ideology would prevent such an opening of the Left to fully take place.

Hall himself does not counter the general effects that the discursive turn produced in critical theory from the 1960s onward. Nor does he believe that an engagement with the discursive necessarily amounts to a retreat from the political. In an interview with Lawrence Grossberg, while discussing the recent publication of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, he observes: “The discursive metaphor is . . . extraordinarily rich and has massive political consequences. For instance, it enabled cultural theorists to realize that what we call ‘the self’ is constituted out of and by difference, and remains contradictory” (Hall 1986c, 56). However, he continues:

The question is, can one . . . follow that argument to the point that there is nothing to practice but its discursive aspect? I think that’s what [Laclau and Mouffe’s] recent book does. . . . I would put it polemically in the following form: the last book thinks that the world, social practice, is language, whereas I want to say that the social operates *like* a language. (Hall 1986c, 56)<sup>35</sup>

Hall formulates similar concerns in “The Problem of Ideology” (1986b). While commenting on the readings of Gramsci that have sought to rethink the problem of ideology in non-economistic terms, an effort that he clearly appreciates, he nonetheless warns: “Often this approach replaces the inadequate notions of ideologies ascribed in blocks to classes with an equally unsatisfactory ‘discursive’ notion which implies total free floatingness of all ideological elements and discourses” (40). In this view, “the elements of a discourse appear spontaneously to combine and recombine with each other, without material constraints of any kind other than that provided by the discursive operations themselves” (40). On the contrary, the question of the material forces constituting the points of application of a given ideological discourse is central, if one wants to understand the efficacy of ideology as such: “No ideological conception can ever become materially

effective unless and until it *can be* articulated to the field of political and social forces and to the struggles between different forces at stake” (41).

According to Hall, history is one of the key constraints that frame the emergence of effective ideological formations, for every element in a given social formation bears the mark of its history of articulations, which limits its possibilities to be articulated differently in the present. For instance, he observes, it may be perfectly possible to articulate “the nation” to a progressive political project and make it embody “a national-popular collective will, as Gramsci argued” (Hall 1986b, 41). In Britain, however, the historical links of “the nation” to racist ideologies and to the project of imperial expansion make any new progressive articulation of it more difficult to realize—and perhaps less desirable in the first place:

These associations are not given for all time. But they are difficult to break because the ideological terrain of this particular social formation has been so powerfully structured in that way by its previous history. These historical connections . . . are the “traces” which Gramsci mentioned: the “stratified deposits in popular philosophy,” which no longer have an inventory, but which establish and define the fields along which ideological struggle is likely to move. (Hall 1986b, 41-42)<sup>36</sup>

As Hall puts it elsewhere: “if you are going to try to break, contest or interrupt some of these tendential historical connections, you have to know when you are moving against the grain of historical formations” (Hall 1986c, 54). Hence, his trenchant comment on Laclau and Mouffe’s work: “Their problem isn’t politics but history” (58).

Laclau and Mouffe’s wholesale turn toward the discursive and their indifference to history—in other words, their obliteration of the concrete—explain, in general, Hall’s skepticism toward *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* as opposed to *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*. However, Hall had raised similar questions also about Laclau’s earlier work, in the context of a discussion of Thatcherism (Hall [1980] 1988). Two questions, in particular, are relevant to my discussion. First: “If ideologies do not belong to classes but are articulated to them through ideological struggle, it remains a difficulty to understand what ideologically free ‘class practices’ are and how they function” (140). Second: “The thesis of the ‘non-class belongingness’ of ideological elements . . . takes too little into consideration the fact that the articulation of certain discourses

to the practices of particular classes has been secured over long periods” (140). Both questions concern the “material” through which ideologies operate and, specifically, the degree to which that material should be considered to be free or charged of previous determinations. Who activates ideological struggle if ideologies do not belong, at least tendentially, to particular classes and social segments in the first place? And to what extent does the theoretical principle of the non-necessary class belongingness of ideological elements in fact eclipse histories of articulation of certain ideologies to certain classes? By posing such questions even before the publication of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Hall in fact seems to suggest that Laclau’s earlier reflections already engendered some of the abstraction to be found in his later work with Mouffe.

In Hall’s view, Laclau inherits part of these ambiguities from Althusser and his psychoanalytically inflected theory of ideological interpellation. A critique of the latter appears, for instance, in “The Toad in the Garden” (1988c). I observed earlier that, in this piece, Hall criticizes Althusser’s tendency to blur the boundaries between state and civil society rather than attending to the articulatory practices operating across the two. In the same essay, he also questions the capacity of Althusser’s theory to account for the material through which ideology works, that is, the ground on which ideology installs itself. It is renown that, for Althusser, power *produces* its subjects through interpellation. His notion of interpellation refers to the moment an individual is hailed and, by the very gesture of turning and responding to the address, that individual properly becomes a subject. Althusser famously illustrates this process through the scene of a police hailing:

Ideology “acts” or “functions” in such a way that it “recruits” subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or “transforms” the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: “Hey, you there!” (Althusser [1970] 1971, 162-163)

According to Hall, “the proposition, derived from Lacan, that ideology is material because it operates in and through the production of subjects” is to be read as Althusser’s attempt “to secure the materialism of ideology without reductionism” (Hall 1988c, 48). In other words, by insisting on

the productive function of ideology and on the contingency of the scene of interpellation, Althusser avoids assuming that some given material conditions organically give rise to and are reflected in a given ideology. Hall, of course, does not object to this. Neither does he object to the recourse to Lacanian psychoanalysis in order to explain “how it is we are formed as subjects and how we ever come to enter language, meaning, representation” (50). However, Thatcherism in his view poses a different question:

What Thatcherism poses is the problem of understanding how already positioned subjects can be effectively detached from their points of application and effectively *repositioned* by a new set of discourses. This is precisely a historically specific level of application of the interpellative aspects of ideology that is *not* adequately resumed or explained by the transhistorical speculative generalities of Lacanianism. (Hall 1988c, 50)

In other words, Thatcherism did not emerge out of a historical void. The history preceding it and the position that such a history had already ascribed to different subjects and social forces within the British social formation *do matter* to an understanding of the phenomenon; and, more specifically, of the ideological work that sustained the construction of its ascendancy.

Therefore, part and parcel of Hall’s approach to Thatcherite ideology has been a reconstruction of its history. According to his account, the emergence of Thatcherism needs to be explained in relation to the crisis of the British “post-war settlement,” that is, the historical compromise that witnessed both Labour and the Conservatives organize their respective political projects around a fundamental social consensus over the Keynesian welfare state.<sup>37</sup> Throughout the 1960s, that consensus began to collapse—as made clear, in Hall’s view, by the upheavals of the 1960s, the counter-cultural forms of opposition to the Vietnam War, and the industrial militancy of the early 1970s, among other phenomena. As he puts it: “One phase of hegemony had disintegrated; the society entered that era of contestations, crises, and alarms that frequently accompanies the struggles for the formation of a new hegemonic stage” (Hall 1988c, 37). Moreover, he argues, it is precisely the social democratic management of this crisis—especially by Labour governments in 1966-70 and 1974-79—that prepared the ground for the subsequent appearance of Thatcherism on the British political scene. Labour approached the crisis through “corporatist”

strategies of containment, trying to secure a partnership between the representatives of capital, those of labor, and the state (representative of “the people”), yet in fact demobilizing popular sectors (Hall [1980] 1988, 134-135). According to Hall, this laid the ground for Thatcherism to capitalize on “the disorganized discontents of the popular classes,” hence constructing “an alternative ‘bloc’ organized around the powerful themes of ‘anti-statism,’ ‘anti-collectivism,’ ‘anti-creeping socialism’ and ‘anti-the power bloc’ (i.e. social democracy in power)” (136).

“Social democracy in power” denotes, in this context, not simply Labour governments as much as the broader post-war settlement involving Labour and Tories alike. It is true, as Hall remarks, that Thatcherism combined neoliberal ideological elements with conservative elements organic to the Tory tradition (Hall 1988c, 37). And it is also true, as he further observes, that the conservative government of Edward Heath (1970-74) anticipated many of the ideological elements characterizing the Thatcherite project, regarding both economic policy and the management of social discontent (38). However, “when Thatcherism finally emerged it was pitched against the ‘creeping corporatism’ of *all* recent governments, including that of Mr. Heath. . . . Thatcherism thus won and transformed the Conservative party first, before setting about winning and transforming the country” (38). More precisely, Thatcherism set out to transform the Conservative Party *and* the field of popular common sense, before taking power within the party and, through the party, in the state. This process is important to register, for it signals the multiple sites of struggle involved in a politics of hegemony.

For Hall, neither Laclau’s nor Althssuer’s respective conceptualizations of ideology can help us fully understand the process by which Thatcherism rearticulated the field of popular anxieties and common sense at its disposal. Hall turns, instead, to Gramsci’s account of the processes of ideological transformation. As he recalls, Gramsci argued that an ideological transformation follows from an intervention that builds on the old discourse and turns elements already present in it—perhaps as secondary elements—into the nucleus of a new ideological formation (Hall [1980] 1988, 138-139). In other words, the material through which the ideology of Thatcherism took shape and affirmed itself was never fully “rough.” The process is better described as a rearticulation of the field of popular common sense through a reorganization of its constitutive elements. According to Hall, this reorganization was accomplished through

interpellation and, importantly, did not rest on *one* interpellative structure (such as class interpellation), but on the condensation of a plurality of interpellations. The Thatcherite interpellation of “woman” is perhaps the best illustration of the process:

Women . . . represented as “guardians” of the family, are also, by that position, connotatively identified with the keeper of traditional wisdoms, and guardian of conventional popular morality; but this composite “she” is, at the same time, the “practical one”—the one who knows the “value of money” and the “impact of rising prices in the shops”: that is, the figure through which the economic and monetarist themes of Thatcherism can be made to connect with the empirical experience of . . . ordinary folk. “She” is, of course, . . . concerned for the educational chances of her child: the woman alone on the streets at night, who can no longer go about her ordinary business unmolested: . . . and, properly addressed, she is the wife of the militant trade unionist on strike, who brings home to him the harsh realities and consequences of living without the weekly wage, and urges a “speedy return to work”—for the sake of the children, of course. Needless to say, she is the emblematic mother of conventional sexual ideology, for whom abortion is a “crime against nature.” “She” has played a quite critical ideological role in the construction of popular moralities in the recent period. (Hall [1980] 1988, 145)

Thus, the ideology of Thatcherism is not regarded, by Hall, as a simple collection of false representations hiding the real exercise of power from “the people.” Instead, Thatcherism was able to occupy a key ideological terrain—that of identity—opened up by the crisis of the British post-war settlement and the emergence of new social and political forces. It did so to a degree of success that the Left did not achieve, not least, according to Hall, because the latter did not take *that* struggle seriously enough. At work in this analysis is what Larraín terms a “neutral” understanding of ideology, which Hall shares with Gramsci, Althusser, and Laclau, among others. Yet, for Hall, the abstract formulations of how ideology works offered by either Laclau or, especially, Althusser, unlike Gramsci’s account of ideological transformations, are of little help if one is to account for how Thatcherism intervened into its concrete conjuncture; that is, if one wants to explain not how individuals were transformed into subjects by authoritarian

populism, but rather how subjects and social forces bearing the traces of previous histories of articulation were effectively *repositioned*. This analysis allowed Hall to *both* highlight the identity politics of Thatcherism as part of its politics of hegemony *and still* regard the terrain of identity politics as a fertile and necessary ground for the emergence of counter-hegemonic formations.

*The Identity Politics of Thatcherism: From Mugging to Section 28*

In *Policing The Crisis: Mugging, The State, and Law and Order* (1978), Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts analyze one particular passage in the crisis of the British social formation. This is the moment of 1972-73, when a moral panic about mugging makes its appearance in British society, then disappears for some time, and resurfaces in 1974-76. The term “mugging” began circulating in the British press in 1972 allegedly to describe a new type of street crime, even as Hall and his colleagues demonstrate that no evidence could be collected of a new wave of crime, much less of a new *type* of crime. Yet, among other factors, the borrowing of the very term from the context of the United States and the association of the crime with black (male) youth worked to consolidate the belief that something new and foreign was making its appearance on British streets (6-28). The apparatuses of the state (the media, the police, and the judiciary) were mobilized in exceptional ways in the context of the mugging panic. The very project of *Policing the Crisis* took shape out of outrage at the disproportionate sentences handed down in 1973 to three youths who robbed and injured an elder man in Handsworth, Birmingham—twenty years to Paul Storey and ten years to James Duignan and Mustafa Fuat.

*Policing the Crisis* reads this explosion of a moral panic—punctuated by such exceptional sentences as well as by a media campaign about “black crime” and an escalation of conflict between the police and black communities—as the high point of accumulation of a number of social contradictions that could no longer be managed within the frame of the British post-war consensus. According to Hall *et al.*, the popular and political fixation on mugging in 1972-73, and later in 1974-76, speaks precisely of the *crisis* of that consensus. In other words, *Policing the Crisis* interprets the moral panic about mugging as a symptom of a crisis

of hegemony and, at the same time, as a central articulatory moment in the struggle to establish a new hegemony. Importantly, within the frame of this analysis, Hall *et al.* situate the politics of race at the core of the emerging hegemonic struggle:

[*Policing the Crisis*] tries to examine why and how the themes of race, crime and youth—condensed into the image of “mugging”—come to serve as the articulator of the crisis, as its ideological conductor. It is also about how these themes have functioned as a mechanism for the construction of an authoritarian consensus, a conservative backlash: what we call the slow build-up towards a “soft” law-and-order society. But it also has to ask: to what social contradictions does this trend towards the “disciplined society” . . . really refer? How has the “law-and-order” ideology been constructed? What social forces are constrained and contained by its construction? What forces stand to benefit from it? What role has the state played in its construction? What real fears and anxieties is it mobilising? These are some of the things we mean by “mugging” as a social phenomenon. It is why a study of “mugging” has led us inevitably to the general “crisis of hegemony” in the Britain of the 1970s. (Hall *et al.* 1978, viii)

Thus, *Policing the Crisis* marks a key moment in Hall’s theoretical trajectory. As the passage above suggests, its analysis of the moral panic about mugging and of the politics of race embedded in it prepared the ground for Hall’s later conceptualization of Thatcherism as a form of authoritarian populism, operating not only but also on the terrain of identity politics. Racial antagonisms figure, already in this earlier analysis, not as a “covering up” of deeper social contradictions, but as a social contradiction in its own right that comes to function as a privileged *ideological conductor* both for the crisis of hegemony (how the crisis is felt) and for the manufacturing of a new authoritarian consensus in response to it: the incitement of a popular call from below in support of law and order.

Hall *et al.* identify, in the context of crisis, a shift in the exercise of power toward the coercive pole of the consent/coercive pair. Yet they also insist that the centrality acquired by coercion does not displace the problem of consent from the core of political struggle. The two appear, instead, in articulation. Hall himself would later recall that in *Policing the Crisis* the idea of authoritarian populism found one of its first, if tentative,

formulations (Hall 1985b, 116).<sup>38</sup> Pushing this argument further, while the mugging panic predates, as such, the formal rise to power of Margaret Thatcher, the analysis offered in *Policing the Crisis* must be understood, retrospectively, as integral to Hall's analysis of Thatcherism: a politico-economic project that in part exceeds the sequence of the three Thatcher governments (1979-90). Indeed, the relative success of Thatcherism has largely depended on its capacity to win space in civil society *before* taking formal power in the state.<sup>39</sup>

In light of these continuities between *Policing the Crisis* and Hall's subsequent analysis of Thatcherism, it is not surprising that the book also marks one of Hall's earlier engagements with Gramsci's theorizing. As Sparks (1996) observes, *Policing the Crisis* was meant not only to understand the moral panic about mugging, but also to synthesize the theoretical work carried out at the CCCS during the previous five years. These were the years that witnessed the appropriation and translation of Althusser's Marxism into cultural studies. However, "Althusser and his idea of the 'ideological state apparatus' are invoked more or less in passing on a number of occasions, but the real centre of attention is on developing aspects of Gramsci's work on the winning of consent" (88). Sparks is right in situating *Policing the Crisis* as a moment of passage from Althusser to Gramsci. If Hall *et al.* attempt not only to understand the social phenomenon of mugging, but also "to contribute to the development of a specifically Marxist theory of the state" (Hall *et al.* 1978, 196), their contribution is certainly more Gramscian than Althusserian.

It is by turning to Gramsci that Hall *et al.* address the central problem of reconciling the principle of "the determination in the last instance by the economic" with the "relative autonomy" of the political (the state). Indeed, they draw on Gramsci to argue that power is exercised by a dominant class in liberal social formations in the form of hegemony—that is, through the extension of its authority in the state and civil society, the negotiation of interests of different classes and class fractions in the service of the winning of consent, hence the manufacturing of a relatively cohesive hegemonic bloc. It follows, they argue, that the liberal state does not (cannot) operate as the direct and transparent expression of ruling class interests: "The *relative independence* of the state (the 'relative autonomy' of the political from the economic) is, in capitalist societies, the *necessary condition* for this 'task' of cohesion and unity" (Hall *et al.* 1978, 204-205). And they continue:

For this reason, the view of the capitalist state as “the executive committee of the ruling class” is not a particularly helpful one. . . . The temptation is to “read” the political level of the state as always and *directly expressive*, either of the “needs” of the productive forces or of the narrow class interests of one ruling class fraction. This obscures the fact that a fundamental class can exercise power through the mediation, at the political level, of a ruling or “governing” class fraction different from itself. (Hall *et al.* 1978, 205)

In other words, even if the principle of “the determination in the last instance by the economic” may explain, at a higher level of abstraction, the relation between the mode of production and the formation of the state, it cannot account for the articulation of that relation in the concrete life of a social formation. According to Hall *et al.*, a necessary ingredient of that articulation in liberal societies is the “relative autonomy” of the political. Only by operating within such a regime of relative autonomy can a dominant class successfully consolidate and exercise its hegemony.

The principle of the relative autonomy of the different levels of the social formation—which is a correlative of the principle of articulation—is a guiding thread in *Policing the Crisis*. This is what allows Hall *et al.* to read the moral panic about mugging as an operation of ideology. Their reading is grounded on Stanley Cohen’s classic sociological work *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (1973), yet supplemented and transformed through a Marxist perspective. As one of the authors of *Policing the Crisis*, Tony Jefferson, has recently put it, Cohen’s focus on the *what* and *how* of moral panics had to be integrated with a historical materialist analysis of *why* the panic about mugging took place when it did (Jefferson 2008, 114). Yet, Jefferson continues, “we were equally critical of a conventional, reductive Marxism. In particular, we were interested in understanding how it was that the relative autonomous institutions of the state . . . contributed to the panic independently (i.e. in line with their own institutional goals, demands, protocols), but also in a way that operated collectively to reproduce the ideas of the powerful, ideas that advantaged the ruling class alliance: the dominant ideology” (114). In other words, even as Hall *et al.* read the mugging panic as a symptom of the crisis of hegemony and a key articulatory moment in the emerging politico-ideological struggle to secure a new hegemony—a reading that leads them to reconceptualize the very

notion of “moral panic” proposed by Cohen—they also avoid reducing the moral panic to a *direct effect* of the crisis: “We are not of course attempting to force this convergence into too tight or neat a fit. . . . The reaction to mugging has its own ‘inner history,’ within the juridical and ideological spheres: crime control, the police and courts, public opinion and the media. If it relates to the ‘crisis in hegemony,’ it can only be *via* the shifting balance and internal relations between different state apparatuses in relation to the management of crisis” (Hall *et al.* 1978, 305).

It is worth emphasizing that the principle of the relative autonomy of the political is extended, in *Policing the Crisis*, not only to the state as such, but also to *each apparatus* of the state. This is what Hall *et al.* mean when they argue that the moral panic relates to the general crisis in the British social formation via the shifting balance *between* different state apparatuses. Or, as Jefferson puts it in his comment above, one of the central goals of the project was to produce an analysis of how different state apparatuses operated in concert but also contributed *independently* to the emergence of the moral panic. In other words, implicit in the analysis is the idea that a regime of relative autonomy regulates not only the relations between the political, the ideological, and the economic (in this case, the relation between the state and the mode of production), but also the dynamics internal to each level (in this case, the relations among different state apparatuses). If the state cannot be understood simply as a direct expression and the guardian of ruling class interests, similarly each state apparatus must be understood not only as an expression of state ideology, but also as operating according to its own internal logics.

This is clear, for instance, in the discussion of the particular role played by the police in the production of the mugging panic. According to Hall *et al.*, while the police, like the media, contributed to amplify the popular fear of a new wave of crime and to associate mugging with black male youth, it did so in a different temporal relation to the explosion of the moral panic as such: “The role of the police in any campaign of the sort conducted against ‘mugging’ is similar to that of the media, but they come in to play at an *earlier* stage in the cycle” (Hall *et al.* 1978, 38). Indeed, the London police became concerned with mugging *before* the latter turned into a matter of widespread public concern. Starting from this observation, Hall *et al.* come to argue that the police, rather than simply *reacting* to mugging, contributed in particular ways to produce it as a social phenomenon in the first place.<sup>40</sup> Importantly, this argument is grounded not just on the assumption that the

police, as an apparatus of the state, works as a direct agent of the dominant ideology, but on an analysis of its internal logics and of key shifts in its organizational practices.

As Hall *et al.* observe, the British police forces underwent throughout the 1960s a process of increasing specialization, that is, the formation of special squads to deal with particular types of crime (Hall *et al.* 1978, 46). From this process emerged the London Transport Police Special Squad, which came to be known as the “Anti-Mugging” Squad and which was quick in mobilizing against mugging early in 1972, producing a discourse of emergency that would *later* enter the media and translate into a wave of popular anxiety (39-40). This process was sustained, in turn, by the common practice within the police forces of channeling more resources into crimes with high detention potential—a practice that finds its logic in the fact that the “clean-up rate” functions, as a matter of fact, as the primary measure of police success. As Hall *et al.* argue, “this logical practice is also a structuring one; it amplifies the volume of these selected crimes, since the more resources are concentrated, the greater the number recorded” (38). Thus, on the one hand, specific practices and organizational transformations internal to the police forces had a direct effect on the emergence of the mugging panic. On the other hand, the specialization of the police also contributed to the production of mugging, if perhaps more indirectly, by weakening the links between the police and the community: “Today, . . . the ‘typical’ policeman is a professional ‘cop,’ member of a crime-fighting unit, whose cultural contact with the people he polices is minimal” (46). According to Hall *et al.*, this erosion of police-community relations was relevant to the manufacturing of the moral panic because of the ideological location of mugging, in fact, within *particular* communities: black urban communities.

The analysis I have briefly summarized here shows how each state apparatus (in this case, the police) contributed to the production of a moral panic about mugging within a regime of relative autonomy, that is, according not only but also to its inner logics. If this is true of the police, it is all the more true of the media, which are formally and institutionally independent from the state.<sup>41</sup> That analysis also begins to highlight how part and parcel of the production of the moral panic was a location of mugging in black urban communities: an articulation of mugging and race.<sup>42</sup> Also the latter, however, possesses its own inner history. That is, also the politics of race mobilized in the context of the moral panic operated within a regime of

relative autonomy. Hall *et al.* write: “As race relations have worsened in the country generally, as black militancy and politicisation have grown, and as the number of black youths unable to find employment has multiplied . . . so the police in the black communities have come, progressively, to perceive the black population as a potential threat to ‘law and order’” (Hall *et al.* 1978, 45). As this passage suggests, at least three different but interrelated dynamics produced race as a terrain of antagonism that became central to the mugging panic and, more broadly, to the crisis of hegemony and the emergence of a populist authoritarian response to it: the specific position of immigrant and black workers within the British labor force, the articulation of historically specific anti-immigration and racist ideologies, and the politicization of black communities themselves.

On the one hand, Hall *et al.* observe that the economic crisis and the rise of unemployment in the 1970s have had a specific impact on the black labor force already present in Britain. They argue that this particular moment must be understood in relation to the position more generally assigned to black workers within British industry: “In the early 1950s, when British industry was expanding and undermanned, labour was sucked in from the surplus labour of the Caribbean and Asian subcontinent. . . . In periods of recession, and especially in the present phase, the numbers of immigrants have fallen . . . and a higher proportion of those already here are shunted into unemployment. In short, the ‘supply’ of black labour in employment has risen and fallen in direct relation to the needs of British capital” (Hall *et al.* 1978, 343). Yet, on the other hand, that relation has been less *direct* than it may seem. While the flow of black labor in and out of British industry (and of Britain itself) depended on the vicissitudes of British capital, Hall *et al.* do not fail to highlight that “what has *regulated* the flow is, of course, legislative (i.e. political) action. And what has prepared the ground for this use of black labour as a fluid and endlessly ‘variable’ factor in British industry is the growth of racism (ideology)” (343). As they point out, economic, political, and ideological factors do not directly *reflect* each other in this process, but rather *converge*.

Central in the articulation of the racist ideology specific to this period has been the figure of Enoch Powell. Strongly committed to free-market capitalism and an earlier critic of the post-war consensus from the Right, Powell was also at the forefront of anti-black immigration campaigning, especially throughout the 1960s. His “Rivers of Blood” speech, delivered on April 20, 1968 at the Birmingham Conservative Political Centre,

attacked the Labor government's Commonwealth Immigrants Act (passed in February of the same year) and made him into one of the most popular and vocal advocates of anti-immigration and repatriation (Hall *et al.* 1978, 246; A. Smith 1994, 151-154). But, in fact, the Commonwealth Immigrants Act was already Labour's concessive reaction to Powell's campaigning against the entrance in Britain of Kenyan Asians—indentured laborers recruited from British India, now British passport-holders, who had settled in East Africa during colonial times mainly to work on the Kenya-Uganda railway. Following intense public debates on the matter, of which Powell had been a key protagonist, the Commonwealth Immigrants Act imposed stricter controls on entry as well as on the right to family reunification. With the return of the Conservatives to government in 1970, even stricter regulations were implemented through the Immigration Act (1971). And although Labour was critical of the latter, it did nothing to repeal it on its return to office in 1974 (Hall *et al.* 1978, 299). If during the 1950s and 1960s Powell's positions, both on free-market capitalism and on immigration and race relations, violated the codes and contents of the post-war consensus and did not favor him within the Conservative Party, by the 1970s such positions not only had been taken up by the Tories, but had managed to shift the entire political spectrum further to the right (A. Smith 1994, 136-138). The process would reach its peak, of course, with the election of Thatcher in 1979, who absorbed and fully rearticulated *as centrist* many of the themes first introduced by Powell into the public debate.

In this context, Hall *et al.* argue that race cannot be inserted into Marxist analysis only as an element of the structures (black labor recruited from the former colonies being considered as a structural element of British industrial expansion in post-war times). Race also becomes “a key element in the class struggle—and thus in the *cultures*—of black labour” (Hall *et al.* 1978, 347).<sup>43</sup> In a context of rampant racism, racial identification becomes an integral component of the way black communities and black workers experience their position within the social formation and collectively mobilize to transform it. Thus, race is not only central to the ideological articulation of mugging, but also forms a terrain on which any counter-hegemonic formation must find its conditions of emergence.

This problem is discussed in the last chapter of *Policing the Crisis*, titled “The Politics of ‘Mugging’” (327-397). Hall *et al.* write:

It is through the counter-ideology of race, colour and ethnicity that

the black working class becomes conscious of the contradictions of its objective situation and organises to “fight it through.” This is especially so now for black youth. It is race which provides the mediated link between the structured position of secondariness and subordination which is the “fate,” the “destiny” inscribed in the position of this sector of the class, and the experience, the consciousness of their being second-class people. (Hall *et al.* 1978, 347)

Hall *et al.* understand this formation of counter-ideological consciousness, in Marxist terms, as the process that leads a class “in itself” (in this case, a racialized class fraction) to become a class “for itself” (see Marx [1847] 1956). However, what distinguishes the black class fraction discussed at this point in *Policing the Crisis* from the proletariat that Marx had in mind is not only the key mediator of postcolonial race relations, but also the very material conditions for that formation of consciousness: “It is the common experience of ‘worklessness’ rather than the discipline of combination in social production which seems to be providing the catalyst” (Hall *et al.* 1978, 356).<sup>44</sup> In other words, according to their analysis, it is not factory life that primarily accounts for the recognition of common interests among black working class people (especially black youth) in Britain in the 1970s, but rather a common experience of unemployment that begins to translate into *a refusal to work (under those conditions)*: “a new form of ‘negative consciousness’ around the condition of being unemployable” (356).

More specifically, Hall *et al.* focus on the formation of segregated communities in the urban centers and the development, within those spaces and in the face of both racism and generalized unemployment, of strategies of survival other than wage labor, including crime. They term this process “the birth of *colony society*” (Hall *et al.* 1978, 351). It is “colony life,” in their view, which provided the material conditions for the formation of a black collective consciousness. Yet once again, they read this process by emphasizing its politico-ideological mediations. On the one hand, “the formation of the ghetto ‘colony’ was a defensive and corporate response. . . . This emphasis on defensive space becomes more pronounced in the face of public racism, which rapidly developed in the society outside the boundaries of ‘the colony’ through the 1960s” (351). Thus, the formation of segregated communities was strongly mediated in the first place by the articulation of racist ideologies such as Powellism. On the other hand, this defensive segregation began to give rise to a form

of collective consciousness: an apprehension of itself, by this particular class fraction, as a force *for* itself. But also this process was mediated by politico-ideological transformations, particularly the emergence of Black Power in the United States and its travelling across the Atlantic:

This qualitative shift has not happened spontaneously. It has a history. It began with the discovery of black identity, more specifically the *rediscovery*, inside the experience of emigration, of the African roots of “colony” life. The “African” revival in the “colony” population was fed and supported by the post-war African nationalist revolutions. But it derived its positive content—as well as its clear materialisation within the life and confines of the “colony”—from the black liberation movements in the United States from the early 1960s onwards and the black rebellions which spread through the ghettos, behind the mobilising slogans of “black is beautiful” and “black power.” (Hall *et al.* 1978, 356)

Thus, the travelling of anticolonial and Black Power ideologies helped articulating the material conditions of black urban communities—including the recourse to different types of crime as a strategy of survival alternative to wage labor—into a form of oppositional consciousness. Not surprisingly, this was a central ingredient in the deterioration of police-black relations. Therefore, even as they warn against a romanticization of “colony life” (Hall *et al.* 1978, 360), and even as they question at length the degree of political effectiveness of a consciousness steeped in such material conditions (361-381), Hall *et al.* are firm in locating race and its spatial organization in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s, not only as the concrete ground on which the moral panic about mugging installed itself, but also as a front of struggle in its own right within the broader hegemonic struggle taking place in that time and place.

The analysis comes full circle at this point: the formation of a black class fraction within the British working class in post-war times and the emergence of racist ideologies in the 1960s converged to produce black segregated communities in the urban centers peculiarly affected, in turn, by the rise of unemployment. While this configuration provided the material basis on which the moral panic about mugging installed itself as an ideological conductor of a more general crisis of hegemony—for the different apparatuses of the state contributed to locate the black neighborhood as a key site of threat to law and order—the same configuration also

began to function as a site for the emergence of counter-ideological forms of consciousness. Yet, even as the analysis comes full circle, the “gaps” between the different processes involved—the vicissitudes of British capital, the regulation of migration flows, the rise of postcolonial racism, the muggers who did mug, the police who policed, the media that amplified the moral panic, the courts that handed down “deterrent” sentences, the formation of black consciousness—are not circumvented. Rather, they are exposed through an analysis of historically specific politico-ideological articulatory practices. Each moment in this sequence operated within a regime of relative autonomy, that is, in a relation of articulation to the other moments. Race, and by extension the terrain of identity politics, figures in *Policing the Crisis* as such a terrain of struggle in its own right yet articulated to the totality of the social formation.

Thus, *Policing the Crisis* was pivotal not only in anticipating Hall’s subsequent analysis of Thatcherism, but also in situating the analysis and the politics of race on the horizon of cultural studies. It laid the ground for later works, such as the CCCS’s collective volume *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain* (1982), Paul Gilroy’s *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack’: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (1987), and Kobena Mercer’s *Powellism: Race, Politics and Discourse* (1990), among others. Gilroy makes the influence of *Policing the Crisis* and of Hall’s work explicit in the introduction to his volume, when he writes: “In Britain, ‘race’ cannot be adequately understood if it is falsely divorced or abstracted from other social relations. The chapters which follow will also argue that ‘race’ cannot be reduced to the effects of these other relations” (Gilroy 1987, 14).

In *New Right Discourse on Race and Sexuality* (1994), Anna Marie Smith brings this trajectory one step further by exposing the continuities between moral panics centrally organized around race, such as the mugging panic, and the moral panic about homosexuality that led to the introduction of the infamous Section 28 in the Local Government Act (1988) passed under the third Thatcher government.<sup>45</sup> The Local Government Act was meant to significantly reduce the powers of local governments, in line with Thatcher’s centralist project. Yet the act became renown and sparked debates especially because of the introduction of Section 28, which banned the “promotion of homosexuality” and prohibited local authorities from supporting “the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship” (183). Local governments were constructed, in this context, as the outpost from

which a queer attack on the family and a predatory campaign to corrupt schoolchildren were being launched. According to Smith, the articulatory practices that produced this moral panic about homosexuality in 1987-88, as well its very structure, are in many ways similar to those at work in the moral panics about immigration and race of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>46</sup> By tracking these links, she develops one of the insights of *Policing the Crisis*: “The first phenomenal *form* which the ‘experience of social crisis’ assumes in public consciousness . . . is the *moral panic*. The second stage is where particular moral panics converge and overlap: where the enemy becomes both many-faceted and ‘one’” (Hall *et al.* 1978, 323). In Laclau and Mouffe’s terms, Smith constructs a chain of equivalence between race and sexuality by exposing the ways in which they have been similarly positioned, by the New Right in general and by Thatcherism in particular, at the core of a struggle for hegemony.

As Smith insists, the fact that Section 28 was included in a Local Government Act is of great significance. Indeed, local governments became key sites of Labour opposition to Conservative central governments in post-war times.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, they also became, from the 1970s onward, a laboratory of coalition building involving both the traditional labour base and the new social movements: “In some cases, such as that of the Greater London Council (GLC), local governments became the sites of new leftist coalitions, in which the demands of feminists, black activists and lesbians and gays were granted an unprecedented degree of legitimacy” (A. Smith 1994, 185). For example, it was at the GLC that the London Lesbian and Gay Centre (LLGC) was established in 1985. However, “the Thatcher government responded with the abolition of GLC [in 1986], the re-definition of progressive policy changes as the will of un-British pressure groups, and the demonization of elected local councillors as the tyrannical ‘loony left’” (185). So, the inclusion of the ban on the “promotion of homosexuality” in a Local Government Act has a clear history.

To this, we must add the electoral climate of 1987. Hall himself points out that the “loony left” label, used to discredit local governments in general and the GLC in particular, managed to bring race and sex into the election (Hall 1988b, 263). Moreover, the panic about homosexuality had been prepared through the previous two years by the concerted effort of a variety of actors: segments of the Conservative establishment, parent groups aggressively campaigning against GLC’s progressive policies, and two right-wing national groups, the Conservative Family Campaign

and Christian Action, Research and Education (CARE) (A. Smith 1994, 187-188). Thus, Section 28 of the Local Government Act, as well as the act itself, not only represented yet another moment in the longstanding confrontation between the Conservatives and local governments, and not only formed integral part of the Conservative Party's 1987 election campaign, but also came about in a context of fully operative authoritarian populism: a call (also) from below for authoritarian measures that must be dispensed from above.<sup>48</sup>

The analysis summarized so far illustrates that Section 28, like mugging, must be understood in a relation of articulation to the social formation as a whole and as an ideological conductor of a larger struggle for hegemony. This is, indeed, the first reason why Smith focuses on race *and* sexuality: both perform, in her view, a similar role in British politics in the 1970s and 1980s. But this is not the only way in which her analysis attempts to establish a chain of equivalence between the two. As she demonstrates, racial and sexual moral panics do not just function as *discrete* and *analogous* articulatory points of the project of Thatcherism, but rather draw on one another and even merge in the process. This becomes evident, for instance, when references to the teaching of multiculturalism—subject to heated controversies in Britain throughout the 1980s—enter the debate on Section 28. Smith recalls one such case, involving Margaret Thatcher herself: “At a Conservative Party conference in October 1987, Thatcher explicitly attacked schoolteachers for politicizing the school curriculum. She ridiculed the inclusion of multiculturalism in the schools by suggesting that the notion of ‘anti-racist maths’ was absurd. She then declared, ‘Children who need to be taught to respect traditional moral values are being taught that they have the inalienable right to be gay’” (A. Smith 1994, 218). Noticing these continuous shifts between race and sexuality in the ideological discourse of Thatcherism, and registering the historical sequence from Powellism to Section 28, Smith argues that “AIDS anxiety certainly did give the prohibition of the promotion of homosexuality project its force, [but] racism provided some of its most important structures” (22). This is, indeed, a second reason why she focuses both on the moral panics about black immigration and racialized crime in the 1960s and 1970s and on the panic about homosexuality in 1987-88. The two are not simply analogous. Rather, according to her analysis, the former *structured* the terrain on which the latter installed itself.

Finally, there is a third reason underpinning Smith's joint analysis

of Thatcherite racism and homophobia, which indeed has to do with the structure of both ideological formations. Smith emphasizes one key mechanism of racial and sexual moral panics that Hall *et al.*, instead, almost entirely fail to notice in *Policing the Crisis*. According to her, the ideological production of such moral panics in the 1970s and 1980s has not taken the form of a total frontal attack on blacks and queers, but rather of a *partition* of racial and sexual differences: “Even though these exclusions were extremely ‘popular,’ the British New Right did not engage in a simple total war against these elements, but deployed a tremendously sophisticated complex of frontiers and differentiations” (A. Smith 1994, 42). More specifically, Smith identifies, both in the racist campaigning of the 1960s and 1970s and in the debate on Section 28 in the 1980s, a central distinction between assimilable and subversive blackness, respectable homosexuality and dangerous queerness. Hence, she comments: “I found that the very supporters of Section 28—the law prohibiting the promotion of homosexuality—were themselves engaging in the promotion of a very particular type of homosexuality. They spoke again and again of a law-abiding, disease-free, self-closeting homosexual figure who knew her or his proper place on the secret fringes of mainstream society” (18). One cannot miss the irony in Smith’s tone. And yet, as we shall see, her reference to the promotion of a specific kind of homosexuality on the part of the supporters of Section 28 themselves has theoretical and political implications.

Hall *et al.* seem to glimpse a similar dynamic as the one detected by Smith in few scattered passages of *Policing the Crisis*. For instance, upon mentioning the travelling of Black Power from the United States to Britain in the late 1960s, they observe: “For several months the media and race-relations officials refused to believe that anything so ‘violent’ and un-British as Black Power could take root amongst ‘our West Indian friends’” (Hall *et al.* 1978, 245). And later in the book, while discussing the formation of “colony life” and the association it helped cultivating between black male youth and crime, they state that a “distinction between respectable blacks and the ‘undesirable element’ has become a commonplace in the syntax of race” (352). However, such observations remain quite isolated in *Policing the Crisis* and do not form integral part of the analysis.<sup>49</sup> For Smith, instead, this partition of differences is central to the articulation of racism and homophobia in the context of Thatcherism and to the latter’s capacity to undermine left-wing resistance:

Hall does not address one . . . aspect of Thatcherism which is relevant to the incitement of self-judgement [within the Left], namely Thatcherism's ability to mobilize . . . self-surveillance. Hall points to the support for Thatcherism among "traditional Labour supporters" such as workers, women, blacks, lesbians and gays and so on. From a Nietzschean and Foucauldian perspective, however, a study of Thatcherism should also analyse its incitement or exacerbation of the differentiations among these othernesses. (A. Smith 1994, 121)

As this passage makes clear, Smith's identification of the partition of differences as a key mechanism of Thatcherite ideology leads her to propose a *theoretical supplement* to the theory of hegemony. She finds that supplement, first and foremost, in Michel Foucault's conceptualization of disciplinary power and biopolitics, as elaborated in *Discipline and Punish* ([1975] 1977) and in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* ([1976] 1978).<sup>50</sup> As Foucault famously argues in the latter, for instance, whether one regards sexuality as an instrument deployed to ensure the reproduction of an economically productive population or as a device functioning according to its own logics, what is certain is that total repression has not been its primary tactic from the nineteenth century onward: "The nineteenth century and our own have been rather the age of multiplication: a dispersion of sexualities, a strengthening of their disparate forms, a multiple implantation of 'perversions.' Our epoch has initiated sexual heterogeneities" (37). For Foucault, it is by multiplying the points of its application—a multiplication, rather than a repression of difference—that power has been operating in modern times. Smith writes: "From a Foucauldian perspective, authoritarian discourse does not merely strike the surface of its targeted othernesses; it penetrates their spaces, seizes hold of their logic, separates otherness from its subversive potential, and attempts to achieve total domestication by turning otherness against itself" (A. Smith 1994, 119). Hence, following Foucault, she supplements the theory of hegemony informing Hall's analysis in order to better chart the identity politics of race and sexuality integral to the project of Thatcherism.

Smith asks: "Why should the more subtle aspects of an extremist discourse of bigotry be of any concern?" (A. Smith 1994, 18) The question is legitimate and not entirely rhetorical. In her view, two key reasons require the critic to engage with the partition of differences characteristic of Thatcherism's identity politics. First, in her view, that partition allowed

Thatcherism to position itself as centrist, hence to cultivate a broad base of consent to its project. In the case of Section 28, the supporters positioned themselves as a middle ground between the queer militants and the extremist Left on one side and the extremist Right on the other side: “with the heterosexual majority *and* the good homosexual in the centre” (19). Referencing different official reports presented at the House of Commons and the House of Lords during the debate, Smith shows that the supporters went as far as to “express concern regarding the current backlash against lesbians and gays, and [to] argue that the Section is the best remedy in that it will ‘remove the source of the disquiet,’ namely the ‘unacceptable activities of few extremist councils’” (226). The partition between the respectable homosexual and the dangerous queer, as well as the one between the assimilable and the subversive black, are thus integral to the function that identity politics plays within a struggle for hegemony. For, “[i]f a political project is to obtain a hegemonic status, it must lose every trace of extremism” (19). That is, it must *center* itself.

Second, the articulation of the divide between respectable and dangerous difference by the state also increments and accelerates processes of stratification already at work within identity political formations themselves. Smith puts it bluntly: “Many lesbians and gay men agree with the Thatcherites that our communities have been subjected to surveillance and oppression because our militant activists have gone too far” (A. Smith 1994, 20). The divide between respectable homosexuality and dangerous queerness—not always but often coinciding with stratifications of race and class within sexual communities—is not an “invention” of Thatcherism. Rather, “Thatcherism worked organically, encouraging the ‘good homosexual’ stance against dangerous queerness, and promoting the separation of queer difference from what it can do” (121). Smith shows the effect of this process by analyzing a number of letters appeared on lesbian and gay publications at the time, in which lesbian and gay readers themselves complain against the political militancy of a few extremists and express their support for the Thatcherite bloc (228-233). Thus, a very practical reason to attend to the sophisticated maneuvers of Thatcherism’s identity politics is that the latter owns its success not only to the winning over of the white straight majority, but also to its ability to penetrate, in part, the very communities under attack.

While Smith argues that the theory of hegemony must be supplemented with an analysis of disciplinary power and biopolitics, I suggest that in

the context of contemporary queer debates the reverse is true. I develop this argument in the last chapter of this dissertation. However, it is worth anticipating here some of the reasons why Foucault's conceptualization of power would benefit from an analysis of hegemonic formations and of the politico-ideological practices that preside over their emergence and consolidation. As is well known, Foucault abandons the concept of ideology, but his critique of it is not so dissimilar from Hall's. In his view, the concept presupposes *both* a sharp distinction between ideology and "truth" *and* a relation of unilateral determination between the material base and the superstructures (Foucault [1977] 1980, 118). In other words, Foucault questions, like Hall, the key principles of economism, but this leads him, unlike Hall, to abandon the concept of ideology altogether as well as the broader theoretical terrain of Marxism. If one were to stop here, one could start a discussion over the gains and losses of either rethinking a concept such as ideology beyond the limits of its conventional formulations or abandoning it in favor of more effective conceptual devices. However, what drives Foucault away from Marxism is not just a critique of its conceptual apparatus, but a more fundamental shifting of the *problematic* informing his theorizing.

Foucault never wished to occupy the position of the intellectual "organic" to an emerging counter-hegemonic bloc (what he terms: the "universal intellectual"). While this is the model of the Marxist intellectual quintessentially embodied, in his view, by Jean-Paul Sartre in France at his time, he argues that a new mode of intellectual practice has been taking shape through the second half of the twentieth century: "Intellectuals have got used to working, not in the modality of the 'universal,' the 'exemplary,' the 'just-and-true-for-all,' but within specific sectors, at the precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them (housing, the hospital, the asylum, the laboratory, the university, family and sexual relations)" (Foucault [1977] 1980, 126). Foucault terms this new intellectual figure: the "specific intellectual." And it is *as a specific intellectual* that he approaches the key problems punctuating his theoretical and political trajectory: madness, crime, and sexuality. A focus on hegemony and counter-hegemony is largely replaced by the problematic of identifying specific and localized sites of power and resistance.

Charlie Bertsch suggests that Foucault's attempt to escape the position of the organic intellectual in order to occupy that of a specific intellectual at least in part failed: "Although Foucault was undoubtedly committed

to the idea of the specific intellectual, he ended up being a public figure of nearly Sartre's status. And, because he wrote about such a wide range of topics, he became one of those intellectuals asked to speak on almost any subject" (Bertsch 2000).<sup>51</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that Foucault's reconceptualization of power has been mobilized by some of his readers—including some contemporary queer critics—within political analyses which however fail to register Foucault's shifting of the problematic, from the theory and practice of hegemony and counter-hegemony to the identification of localized sites of resistance.<sup>52</sup> In the last chapter of this dissertation, I argue that to abandon the problem of ideology without registering this shift of the problematic has at least two consequences. On the one hand, Smith observes that Foucault's conceptualization of power tends to display "functionalist and totalizing tendencies," suggesting at times that "every subversion merely becomes a new target for discipline and surveillance, such that [biopolitics] ultimately obtains a totally comprehensive grip on virtually every possible resistance" (A. Smith 1994, 124). This observation proceeds from the fact that Smith reads Foucault while searching for a terrain on which to articulate a counter-hegemonic political practice. Smith *does* register that Foucault's work alone does not profile such a terrain. Instead, contemporary critics who similarly draw on Foucault and project his analyses on the terrain of counter-hegemony, yet *without* a theory of hegemony and ideology, risk reproducing, in practice, a totalizing understanding of discursive power that had supposedly motivated a departure from the Marxist concept of ideology in the first place.

On the other hand, Foucault's notion of biopolitics tends to display a characteristic indifference to the boundaries and the concrete relations of force between different sites of power and resistance. For instance, that state ideology is in part reproduced by identity political formations—in the case of Section 28, that a distinction between respectable homosexuality and dangerous queerness was mobilized by gay and lesbians themselves in their community—does not mean that such formations participate in the reproduction of ideology *in the same way* and *to the same extent* as the state and its apparatuses (although they *do participate* in their own way). Smith herself makes this point. Despite her reading of the self-surveillance activated within black and gay and lesbian communities as integral to the struggle for hegemony conducted by Thatcherism, she points out that "no one actually occupies the positions of the assimilated homosexual or the assimilated black. To identify the differentiating strategies of the

right is not to accuse actual black conservatives of being ‘inadequately’ black” (A. Smith 1994, 102). As this passage suggests, losing sight of the boundaries—hence the concrete articulations—between different sites of power and resistance has political consequences. Hall suggests as much in a rather ungenerous comment on Foucault’s theoretical practice: “[Foucault] saves for himself ‘the political’ with his insistence on power, but he denies himself *a politics* because he has no idea of the ‘relations of force’” (Hall 1986c, 49). Once again, Hall is right only to the extent that one fails to register Foucault’s shifting of the theoretico-political problematic away from the terrain of hegemony and counter-hegemony.

And yet, as Smith’s analysis shows, a Foucauldian understanding of the self-surveillance incited by the multiplication and partition of differences *can* help moving toward a more effective construction of a counter-hegemonic bloc, first and foremost by identifying the obstacles proliferating within the very social forces that would supposedly participate in its making. We could push this argument even further. In the next section, I recover the experience of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM), a group of lesbians and gays from London who organized in 1984-85 in order to support British miners on strike against the second Thatcher government. As this story illustrates, it is also by seizing and redeploying the partition of difference *within* identity political formations that the latter can participate, in their own way, in the emergence of a counter-hegemonic bloc. While the ideological discourse of Thatcherism managed to articulate the interests of *certain* lesbians and gays, hence absorbing segments of such sexual formations into its hegemonic bloc, LGSM positioned themselves at the crossroads of gay/lesbian identity and working-class belonging in an effort to drive lesbian and gay formations into an alliance with the miners on strike.

*Shifting Sites of Hegemonic Struggle:  
Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners*

The story of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) has been subject to relatively little research and it became widely known only recently, through the movie *Pride* (2014) by Matthew Warchus.<sup>53</sup> I recover this story because the experience of LGSM can contribute *both* to the theory of hegemony *and* to contemporary debates about the articulations

rightward of sexual politics. On the one hand, the relation established by LGSM with the miners on strike illustrates the potential of alliance politics as much as the tensions existing between the construction of a counter-hegemonic bloc and the autonomy of each struggle and social force engaging in that process. On the other hand, as Diarmaid Kelliher (2014) points out, the experience of the group illuminates a relative decline of class as a hegemonic matter of concern for the Left in the 1980s; but also, I add, a decline of the traditional institutions of the Left—such as the union and the party—as central sites of hegemonic struggle.

In 1984-85, a strike led by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) under president Arthur Scargill took place in Britain, in response to the massive program of pit closures launched by the second Thatcher government. One of the most intense and protracted industrial disputes in post-war times, the strike lasted twelve months, witnessed an unprecedented deployment of police forces against the pickets and in the policing of entire mining communities, and was the target of an aggressive media campaign portraying the striking miners as the “enemy within.” This strike was different from the ones that had taken place in the recent past: it was experienced on both sides as a point of no return in the confrontation between the British working class and the state. Huw Beynon conveys this feeling in his introduction to *Digging Deeper*, a collective effort at understanding the strike published as early as in 1985: “In 1974 a Tory Government [the Heath government] had gone to the country in the middle of a coal strike; in 1981 the Thatcher Government had back-pedalled rapidly. . . . In 1984, there was no possibility of either course being followed. It was going to be a long strike or nothing” (Beynon 1985, 13-14). Indeed, the strike lasted one year. It ended with the defeat of the NUM, which as a consequence was going to lose significant weight in the British political field.

The labour movement found itself far from united in conducting this struggle. Beynon observes: “As a major struggle for jobs and employment undertaken by a union in the teeth of an offensive from the most right-wing Tory administration in living memory it would seem, in the face of it, to have all the makings of a *unifying* force within the British labour movement. Yet, almost the opposite has happened” (Beynon 1985, 5). Not only did some areas of the NUM itself refuse to join the strike but, predictably, opposition both to the strike and to the NUM leadership was voiced by those sections of the broader Trades Union Congress (TUC) involved in the energy industry, such as the electricians and the power

station engineers (5). Furthermore, the strength of many segments of the labour movement had already been undermined throughout the 1970s. In this sense, “the strike represented not so much the front line as the last ditch” in the confrontation between the working class and the state (20). Finally, the NUM’s decision not to hold a national ballot among its members provoked tensions. As Beynon remarks, the question was not just instrumentally mobilized by the Right, but it was also present in virtually all Labour Party and union meetings. At best, the decision was read as a mistake of the leadership, which would jeopardize the miners’ capacity to win support for the strike both within and outside the NUM. At worst, the image took shape of a leadership coercing miners to take action, even against their own interests (6).

However, despite these fractures *within* the labour movement, around the striking miners and their communities a different movement coalesced attempting to construct—or at least to prefigure *in practice*—a broader counter-hegemonic bloc able to challenge the Thatcherite regime. One of the most decisive elements in this other movement was the formation of support groups in the big cities, which contributed to sustain the communities on strike mostly located in peripheral areas of the country such as Wales or Scotland. Their main activity was collecting money, for as Kelliher observes, “when mining communities and the NUM realized after a few months that the 1984 strike was to be a protracted one, fundraising became a central concern” (Kelliher 2014, 242). In their own contribution to *Digging Deeper*, Doreen Massey and Hilary Wainwright (1985) offer an account of the diversity of the base that organized into support groups: women’s groups, gay and lesbian groups, black groups, and so forth. LGSM was one such group.

In light of this proliferation of support and solidarity across the most diverse segments of civil society, many commentators agree that, despite the ultimate defeat of the miners, the 1984-85 strike cannot be reduced to the story of a wholesale political failure. Hence, Beynon’s almost utopic remark: “‘the movement,’ if assessed from the standpoint of the TUC or Labour Party headquarters, is in pretty bad shape. However, . . . another ‘movement’ may have been brought to life and been tapped by the strike. It has a future” (Beynon 1985, 25). Kim Howells, coordinator of a NUM office in South Wales during the strike, suggestively argues that a different future did already take shape as a *present* reality for those involved in the struggle. In his view, the broad network of solidarity gathered around the

mining communities and the creation, in fact, of “an alternative Welfare State inside Wales” to cover the costs of surviving through one entire year on strike, was politically significant (Howells 1985, 145). Such circumstances revived the awareness that it was possible to take the first steps toward a “more humanitarian and socialist society now, in the dreary midst of Thatcherism, and that it was idiotic to assume that such steps were only possible after some special kind of electoral victory or a triumph on the barricades” (146).

Hall, instead, did not share such an optimistic view of the events. In fact, he made only cursory references to the strike, yet always overdetermined by his broader criticisms of the labour movement and what he regarded as the Left’s incapacity to transform itself in the face of a rapidly changing social formation. In “The Crisis of Labourism” (1988a), for instance, he goes as far as to attack the NUM leadership for its decision to “invite people in the tightest of economic squeezes to come out on strike” (203). Let me bracket out the polemical tone and the lack of vision displayed in this sort of comments, in order to register the real nature of Hall’s concerns. Few sentences later, and in part contradicting his previous dismissal of the strike as such, he slightly adjusts the target: “The cause is correct. The language is a dying one” (203). Hence, he explains:

The miners’ strike certainly contained a powerful “class” dimension. But politically it was not, as Arthur Scargill represented it, a “class-versus-class” showdown because, far from “the class” being united, it was deeply divided. The political task was not to fight a united heroic battle but to unify the miners, in order to unify the class, in order to unify a wider social bloc around the issues. . . . Seen in the light of the failure to address this critical and difficult political task, the absence of a ballot and the contempt which many showed for the very idea of the “bourgeois” deviation of a vote when a 1917 “Winter Palace” scenario was unfolding before their eyes, was a gigantic tactical error, as well as a major error of principle. . . . There followed the police protecting the “right” of one section of “the class” to go to work against the interests of another section of “the class,” the media construction of the strike as “about” law and order and violence, and the failure of one of the most strategic encounters of Mrs Thatcher’s three terms. (Hall 1988a, 204)

Thus, despite his earlier dismissal of the strike, Hall in fact proves to be

conscious of its extraordinary strategic relevance. His critique concerns the way in which the struggle was understood and conducted by the labour movement, particularly by the NUM. Two arguments are woven together in his critique, and one is tactical. According to Hall, the NUM's decision not to hold a national ballot ultimately aided the power bloc's ability to frame the strike (through media) and to manage the conflict (through the deployment of police forces) in ways that jeopardized the miners' struggle. Of course, it would make no sense to argue that the power bloc's approach to the strike was a direct consequence of tactical mistakes committed by the NUM. Yet Hall insists that the NUM's failure to activate a democratic process within its ranks provided the ideological machine set in motion against the miners with a ground on which to articulate an effective narrative against the strike.

Next to this strategic observation, and strictly related to it, is another argument concerning the reading of the political conjuncture. In Hall's view, the NUM leadership offered a representation of the strike that depicted the working class as a ready-made antagonistic force launching an attack on the state. But as a matter of fact, and as already mentioned, the class did not enter the strike as a compact subject. The fractures within the NUM and, more broadly, within the TUC affected the miners' capacity of mobilization from the start. According to Hall, the NUM's misrepresentation of the miners and of the working class as a whole as a ready-made effective force elided the difficult task of transforming the class in itself into a class for itself. In light of this elision, the choice not to hold a national ballot should be read, in his view, not just as a tactical mistake and as an error of principle, but first and foremost as the symptom of a misguided reading of the political conjuncture and of political practice as such: that is, a reading indifferent to the necessary and complex tasks of ideological work and political recomposition. Moreover, for Hall, not only the miners targeted by the program of pit closures—or, for that matter, the entire working class—but a larger field of heterogeneous social forces should have constituted the terrain on which to operate in order to articulate, around the strike, a broad social bloc able to confront and challenge Thatcherism.

Hall's criticisms, and the latter argument in particular, derive from his reading of Gramsci in "New Times," that is, from his understanding of the triangulation between the rise of Thatcherism, the crisis of the Left, and the emergence of new social movements in terms of a war of position. More generally, his pessimistic evaluation of the strike and of the way it

was conducted by the NUM reflects the centrality he granted to ideological struggle. Yet, while his criticisms of the NUM leadership may have entailed certain truths, his polemic against the labour movement blinded him toward real if precarious processes of recomposition that *were* in fact taking place within the folds of the 1984-85 strike. In order to register such processes, one should at least in part divert the attention from the labour movement and its traditional institutions and look, instead, at the emergence of that other movement that coalesced around the miners and of which LGSM paradigmatically formed part. What are the possibilities for counter-hegemony engendered and practiced by new social forces and movements themselves?

LGSM emerged out of the initiative of two gay men, Mark Ashton and Mike Jackson. After the two of them collected money for the miners at the 1984 Pride march in London, a group formed that for one year held meetings, collected donations outside gay spaces, organized fundraising events, took part in demonstrations, and maintained direct contact with the miners. Indeed, the organizational practice of the support groups, in general, consisted most of the time of establishing direct contact with a specific mining community. LGSM was no exception in this respect and twinned with a community in the Dulais Valley, South Wales. The encounter between the lesbian and gay activists and the mining community was transformative for both sides. Once the strike was over, not only did the NUM unilaterally support and secure the passing of a resolution in favor of LGBT rights at the 1985 Labour Party conference, but the 1985 Pride march in London witnessed a contingent of miners from South Wales marching together with LGSM. As Kelliher points out, “this was seen as the fitting culmination of a movement whose central argument was that if lesbians and gay men offered solidarity with the miners and their communities, this support would be reciprocated” (Kelliher 2014, 241). What politico-ideological practices did the group of lesbians and gays from London deploy in order to craft such an alliance with the miners on strike in Dulais? What allowed them to identify with the miners’ struggle, hence generalizing a conflict over the loss of jobs and projecting it onto a broader social bloc?

First of all, it is important to note that the overall strategy appears to be twofold, depending on whether we consider LGSM’s attempt at forging support for the miners *within* the lesbian and gay community or the group’s effort to establish a relation with the miners themselves.

In the latter case, the lesbian and gay activists articulated a discourse grounded on the *analogies* between the two social groups, the modes of their oppression, and their interests. In Laclau and Mouffe's terms, LGSM worked to construct a chain of equivalence between the miners and the lesbian and gay community, and it did so by focusing on three matters of common concern: the state attack on community spaces, police violence, and stigmatizing media representation.

First, as Kelliher argues, the grammar of "community" largely replaced that of "class" in the context of the miners' strike because at stake was not only the loss of jobs, but the survival of broader communities depending—both materially and symbolically—on their bonds with the pits (Kelliher 2014, 249-250). Thus, the program of pit closures promoted by the Thatcher government was interpreted as an attack on entire social milieus organized around the mines. For LGSM, it was not difficult to highlight parallels with what was happening to the lesbian and gay community in the urban context of London at that time. Here too, Kelliher points out, "there was a sense that certain spaces and organizations that had been established to form the basis of a lesbian and gay community . . . were under threat" (250). A prominent example was the institutional threat to such community spaces as the London Lesbian and Gay Centre (LLGC) established at the GLC. As I mentioned in the previous section, the latter was going to be abolished by Thatcher in 1986. To this, we must add the routine raiding of gay bars and the intrusion of "pretty policemen" into public spaces of male gay sex. The grammar of "community" provided a ground to articulate the analogies between miners on the one hand, and lesbians and gays on the other hand, respectively laying claim to their spaces against an increasingly authoritarian state.

The deployment of police forces was key to this dismantling of community spaces, which leads us to the second pivotal element in the manufacturing of the alliance between LGSM and the miners: that is, a critique of police violence. Also in this case, LGSM could easily point to the analogies between the police harassment of which lesbians and gays were constantly the target and the particular role played by police forces in the managing of the 1984-85 strike. In his contribution to *Digging Deeper*, which details the police practices and the use of law in the context of the strike, John McIlroy observes: "Any dispute such as this would have involved intensive direct policing. But a decision was now taken to use the police and the criminal law to a degree, and in a fashion, unprecedented

since [the general strike of] 1926” (McIlroy 1985, 104). Not only did assault replace containment as the main tactic to confront the pickets (106), but police violence entered the mining communities themselves. McIlroy reports a number of testimonies, among which that of this woman: “They broke down the door, smashed the windows, ripped the phone off the wall and gave everyone a good pasting. They were screaming and shouting ‘get the bastards’” (108). Thus, police harassment became an experience that entire mining communities (not only the miners on strike) came to share with both racial and sexual minorities across Britain. As a woman from the community of Dulais put it in *All Out! Dancing in Dulais* (1985), a short DIY documentary produced by LGSM at that time, “for years lesbians and gay men have been telling us, you know, look at us, we’re under attack, we’re being threatened by the police. . . . And then we were there, . . . we were next in line after lesbians and gays, black men, black women.”

Finally, in line with Hall’s conceptualization of Thatcherism as a form of authoritarian populism, many commentators emphasize that the coercive apparatus deployed by the state in the context of the strike was constantly supported by a consolidation of popular consent. The media played a central role in this respect and constituted, indeed, the third ingredient deployed by LGSM to cement its alliance with the miners (Kelliher 2014, 249). The stigmatization to which the miners were subject on the media during the strike, represented as the “enemy within,” largely resembled the experience that lesbians and gays had been going through for already quite some time, and which notably intensified during the AIDS crisis.<sup>54</sup> All of these elements—the attack on community spaces, the threat of police violence and harassment, and the role of the media in crafting popular support to coercive state practices—allowed LGSM and the Dulais mining community to form an alliance based on the analogies between the two different social groups.

But the stakes involved even exceeded, to some extent, the manufacturing of this particular alliance. The identification of those analogies allowed LGSM to participate, along with many other support groups emerged from a variety of constituencies and communities, in the broader attempt to prefigure in practice a heterogeneous counter-hegemonic bloc around the miners’ struggle. In other words, next to the immediate goal of supporting the miners on strike, a large-scale effort informed this proliferation of political organizing throughout civil society: that of transforming a “last ditch” in the confrontation between the British

working class and the state into the point of support for a politics of hegemony involving a broader antagonism between Thatcherism and a complex of heterogeneous social segments—the working class, feminists, environmental activists, black communities, and lesbians and gays. For LGSM, this also meant articulating an ideological discourse that may gather support for the miners *within* the lesbian and gay community at large. So, what happened when LGSM actually mobilized within their community in London?

While analogies were functional and effective to cement an alliance between the group and the Dulais mining community, within the lesbian and gay community the arguments deployed were of a different kind. Here, LGSM mostly practiced a politics of class conflict calling into question the supposed homogeneity of that community. Especially for some members of the group, organizing support for the miners also meant positioning themselves at the crossroads of gay/lesbian identity and working-class belonging.<sup>55</sup> Kelliher observes: “By taking up a distinctly working-class issue as a lesbian and gay group, LGSM could help challenge the middle-class nature of the lesbian and gay scene in London” (Kelliher 2014, 251). Importantly, challenging the middle-class nature of the lesbian and gay scene entailed, in that time and place, developing a critique of the links between Thatcherism and gay identity.<sup>56</sup>

As I argued in the previous section, Thatcher herself has been at the forefront of the attacks on lesbians and gays through the 1980s. Under her second government, not only was the GLC abolished, but gay men became increasingly subject to police harassment as well as the target of aggressive media campaigns during the AIDS crisis. Her strong support for Section 28 represented a culmination of this trajectory. However, the relation between Thatcherism and the lesbian and gay community has been more ambiguous than that. For instance, Thatcher had been one of the few Conservatives to support the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1967. Most importantly, as Smith argues, the Thatcherite attack on lesbians and gays produced, at the same time, the imaginary promise of assimilation through the figure of the respectable homosexual. That promise must be understood also in light of the fact that Thatcherism, as a broader project, paradoxically made room for *certain* lesbians and gays to craft a social position that suited them—through consumer practices. In his contribution to the collective volume *New Times*, edited by Hall and Jacques, gay historian Frank Mort observes that there are “some uncanny resemblances

between lifestyle market segmentation and the politics of identity which have been argued for by the new social movements” (Mort 1989, 168-169). Such resemblances are not just incidental, for consumer practices have been increasingly working, in his view, through the very terrain of identity politicized by the new social movements. In “New Times,” Mort observes, consumer practices “target their audiences with a new precision: Volkswagen for the working woman, Saga Holidays for the young elderly, the pink pound for gay men” (167-168). Mort puts these observations in the service of a critique of the Left. In his view, the latter should take the terrain of consumption more seriously because the extraordinary grip on identities exercised by the consumer culture promoted by Thatcherism exposes, like a litmus test of some sort, what is still missing from the Left’s own political grammar: pleasures and desires.

LGSM similarly registered the links between Thatcherism and lesbian and gay identities, yet to advance a different critique. Rather than complaining about the failures of the Left, they took up a working-class positioning as lesbians and gays in order to launch an attack on gay consumerism. During his speech at a LGSM conference, for instance, Mike Jackson polemically stated that some lesbians and gays “are quite happy with Thatcherism, these are the lesbians and gays who benefit from Tory rule. They have the economic power to carve out a lifestyle which protects them from the harassment, persecution and fear that many lesbians and gay men encounter daily” (Jackson, quoted in Kelliher 2014, 252). As Jackson and other members of the group explained during an interview, this politics of class conflict within the lesbian and gay community managed to raise support for the miners as much as it triggered a number of antagonistic responses: from the complaint that money was being donated to a mining community at a moment when the gay community itself was confronting the threat of AIDS, to a widespread resistance to supporting communities that were perceived as fortresses of heteropatriarchy (Flynn, Goldsmith, and Sutcliffe 1985, 44). Thus, it comes as little surprise that Mark Ashton, in another interview, expressed his desire “to organise with my own kind of people. That’s not necessarily lesbians and gay men—that’s working class people” (Ashton, quoted in Kelliher 2014, 252).

The positioning of LGSM at the crossroads of gay/lesbian identity and working-class belonging speaks of the limits of the logic of equivalence that Laclau and Mouffe locate at the core of a radical democratic politics of hegemony. Equivalence, as a logic and a political tactic, tends to overlook

the stratifications and differentiations internal to each social force, especially identity formations. Smith herself makes this point as a corrective to her own analysis of the continuities between race and sexuality, racism and homophobia, in the project of Thatcherism: “there are many continuities between discourse on race and discourse on sexuality, but there are also important specificities which are erased by these reductionist analogies” (A. Smith 1994, 220). The most important specificity that she highlights is the heteropatriarchal articulation of racial difference and the racial stratifications within the lesbian and gay community (221-222). As I suggested earlier, following Smith, these stratifications and crossroads among different social forces and identity formations provided the ground on which the identity politics of Thatcherism—structured by a partition between respectable and dangerous difference—could install itself. The respectable homosexual is, most often, white and middle-class. But the experience of LGSM shows how the same fractured terrain also works as a point of support for the articulation of counter-hegemonic politico-ideological practices. The logic of equivalence activated by LGSM in their encounter with the Dulais mining community rests also on the politics of class conflict practiced by the group within the lesbian and gay community itself.<sup>57</sup>

It is important to preserve a distinction between the two strategies—two different ideological articulations equally making sense of LGSM’s political practice, yet put forward at different moments in the experience of the group. Preserving a distinction between the two allows this particular story to speak back to the theory of hegemony. On the one hand, as I just argued, the centrality of LGSM’s positioning at the crossroads of gay/lesbian identity and working-class belonging points at the limits of equivalence as a logic and a tactic. On the other hand, as we are about to see, looking at the combination of the two tactics as it concretely materialized in the experience of LGSM throws light on a tension existing between hegemony and autonomy. That is, it illustrates how hegemony may easily entail, *in practice*, a partial and temporary suspension of autonomy.

An acceptance of the boundaries between the miners and the lesbian and gay community—which is necessary to an articulation of equivalence—was not simply implicit in the discourse often deployed by LGSM,<sup>58</sup> but formed part and parcel of a conscious strategy. For instance, at some point during an interview with three members of the group, Rosie Leach recalls one instance when they were contacted by a gay miner—indeed, someone located at the crossroads between gay identity and working-class belonging and dealing

with the complexities of such a position in the heat of the miners' struggle. The gay miner asked for financial help but the group refused to offer him individual support. Following up on Mark Ashton's claim that the whole political idea of LGSM had been to take gay liberation and lesbian liberation into the organized working class, Leach tells this particular story in order to provide an illustration of how they pursued that goal:

what we decided was, we'd send or give some money to the soup kitchen that is organized in the village where he lives, because then we've done it openly as lesbians and gays, and that means that the people in that village are going to realize that we do support what they're doing, so they're less likely to be hostile towards him as a gay person. (Flynn, Goldsmith, and Sutcliffe 1985, 41)

This anecdote is particularly revealing of the difference between the politics LGSM deployed within the lesbian and gay community (where they positioned *themselves* as working-class lesbians and gays) and the one they mobilized, instead, in their relation with the miners: not only accepting the established boundaries between the two social groups, but going as far as to turn down a gay miner's request for support. This certainly testifies to the truth of Laclau and Mouffe's claim that entering a chain of equivalence—that is, practicing a politics of hegemony—necessarily brings about profound transformations for the subjects and the struggles involved. However, Laclau and Mouffe do not fully acknowledge that such transformations may entail *both gains and losses*, as the anecdote recalled above illustrates.

To be sure, while approaching the politics of LGSM from this critical angle and while highlighting its limits, we should take into account that the group established a relation with a subject already occupying, both materially and symbolically, a hegemonic position within the relation itself: the miners on strike organized through a national union. While Laclau and Mouffe would not concede that imbalances of power of any sort can form part of a politics of hegemony as they understand it—this is indeed a critique they direct toward Lenin and the Leninist tradition, including Gramsci's earlier usage of the concept—as a matter of fact political alliances do not take shape outside power, nor are they able to transcend it. Kelliher argues that LGSM shaped its vision and organizing by drawing on the experience of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), which

nonetheless, in order to affirm the autonomy of a politics of sexuality in the 1970s, had always maintained a radically antagonistic attitude toward the Left as a whole (Kelliher 2014, 246). Things changed by the time of the miners' strike in the 1980s: "LGSM was building on the legacy of the GLF, which had been central in establishing a space for lesbian and gay people on the left where their identity was not subsumed. . . . At the same time, LGSM was clear that it was attempting to integrate that voice into a broader movement" (256). Engaging in a politics of hegemony with the very subject occupying a hegemonic position within that broader movement may have certainly affected the degree of autonomy that LGSM could claim for itself throughout the making of the alliance.

Yet, while to a certain extent all of the above is true, there is another side to this story. Not only, as I already mentioned, did the labour movement as a whole react weakly to the miners' strike, but the structure of the NUM itself was under severe attack. Indeed, during the 1984-85 strike, the union's bank accounts were frozen by the state (McIlroy 1985, 116; Kelliher 2014, 244) and this turned support groups such as LGSM into central actors in the struggle. The question of whether LGSM would offer its support to the miners by making use of the union's structure or by establishing direct contact with a mining community had been present in the group's discussions. This allows Lucy Robinson to argue that LGSM consciously chose to elude the NUM for strategic reasons: "By setting up one community group in support of another LGSM hoped it could avoid bureaucratic restrictions and the possibility of co-option" (Robinson 2007, 166). However, while this may reflect how some lesbians and gays felt at the time, it is not true that the group consciously refused to work through the NUM's structures. Mark Ashton makes it clear during an interview: "What we actually said when we started was that we would support the National Union of Mineworkers, the elected leadership of the NUM itself; we would take guidelines from them, we wouldn't be in a position to speak or tell them what to do" (Flynn, Goldsmith, and Sutcliffe 1985, 43-44). And, as Rosie Leach immediately adds, if LGSM ultimately did not organize and channel its support through the NUM, it is because of the attack launched by the state on the union, which undermined the latter's organizational capacities: "that situation has changed a bit . . . because of the fact that you can't send money now directly to the NUM, even if you wanted to. . . . In a sense that argument is being by-passed" (44).

Thus, it does not really matter whether we privilege, as Robinson does,

the point of view of those lesbians and gays who may have felt resistant to work with the NUM or whether we follow Kelliher, instead, who points out that “during a strike in which the union itself was threatened . . . it is unlikely that support hostile to the NUM would have been welcome” (Kelliher 2014, 244). Indeed, that argument had been by-passed. If we approach this question through the lens of the theory of hegemony, what *does* matter is that the hegemony of the NUM in the context of the miners’ strike was concretely under erosion. Moreover, we should insert this specific question of material organizing within a broader picture. As Kelliher observes, “a history of LGSM provides important insights into the weakening of the hegemonic position of ‘class’ as a concern for the left in the 1980s” (Kelliher 2014, 242). Indeed, as already argued, the grammar of “community” largely replaced that of “class” in the context of the 1984-85 strike. Thus, the very logic of a mobilization concerning industrial relations and loss of jobs was nonetheless modeled around the identity politics more familiar to the gay and lesbian movement than the labour movement. This transformation shaped the ground on which the mining communities could meet and join forces with LGSM and other support groups.

This discussion suggests that the limits of the politics practiced by LGSM in their encounter with the miners cannot be reduced to the costs of engaging in a politics of hegemony from a non-hegemonic, nearly auxiliary position. To some extent, the very contrary is true. Neither a wholesale privileging of class conflict over identity politics nor a cooptation of LGSM by the traditional structures of the labour movement (in this case, the NUM) can be said to have pushed the group to suspend its commitment to an uncompromising struggle against homophobia. Paradoxically, in fact, the context in which the lesbian and gay activists organized their apparently auxiliary support for the miners was marked by the increasing ascendancy of “identity” and “community,” at the expense of “class,” as new political categories for the Left. Hence, a partial and temporary suspension of autonomy—exemplified by LGSM’s decision to turn down a gay miner’s request for support despite the group’s commitment to fight homophobia and in partial contradiction with the group members’ own positioning as working-class lesbians and gays within their own identity-based community—needs to be understood in relation to its strategic relevance, as part and parcel of the politics of hegemony as such.

Hall seemed not to notice such productive contradictions at work within the folds of the political organizing proliferating around the miners’

strike. In fact, what emerged through the work of LGSM and other support groups was precisely an attempt to generalize the conflict between the working class and the state and to project it onto a wider social bloc composed of heterogeneous social segments antagonistic to Thatcherism. As I mentioned at the beginning, Hall failed to see this because his reading of the events was overdetermined by his polemic against the British labour movement. And this is true in a profound sense. The point is not only that he may have rendered a limited picture of the strike in order to take a good chance to criticize the NUM and its political failures. Rather, immersed as he was in this polemic, he most probably *really* failed to divert his gaze toward forms of organizing other than the traditional institutions of the labour movement. Yet looking at how progressive social movements and identity political formations *themselves* activate a politics of hegemony—and not only how the Left, through its traditional structures, may succeed or fail to articulate such movements within its own hegemonic project—is key; especially today, thirty years after the 1984-85 miners' strike, when the decline and the shift rightward of those institutions of the Left have entirely transformed the political landscape.

CHAPTER TWO

HOMONORMATIVITY,  
INTERSECTIONALITY, AND THE “MARXIST  
RENAISSANCE” IN QUEER THEORY

In effect . . . the social world, contrary to conventional Marxist theories and politics, is not remotely near transparent.

Roderick A. Ferguson, “To Be Fluent in Each Other’s Narratives”

Hall warned in the 1980 that the reluctance of the British Left to engage with identity politics would concede terrain to Thatcherism and facilitate its struggle for hegemony. Today, we are confronted with a different configuration of the political field. In *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (2003), Lisa Duggan looks at the United States and argues that the politico-ideological apparatus of the neoliberal bloc itself has morphed throughout the 1990s.<sup>1</sup> According to her analysis, the alliances with white supremacists and sexual conservatives typical of the Thatcher-Reagan era have now been largely replaced, in the United States, by a non-redistributive politics of equality able to absorb segments of traditionally progressive identity formations. On the one hand, Duggan diagnoses an increasing detachment of national LGBT lobbying organizations from grassroots activism and from a broader field of alliances with other movements for social and economic justice. Such alliances have given way, in her view, to a new alignment between LGBT lobbying organizations and neoliberal political forces. The endorsement of Bill Clinton by the Human Rights Campaign during the U.S. presidential elections in 1992 marks a clear step in this direction. On the other hand,

Duggan highlights the concomitant emergence of small but influential gay right-wing formations explicitly committed to neoliberalization and close to the Republican Party, such as the Log Cabin Republicans. The result of these shifts—a proliferation of struggles for hegemony taking place both within LGBTQ formations and in the broader political field—is the emergence of what Duggan terms “homonormativity”: the sexual politics of neoliberalism in its current phase.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter focuses on the problem of homonormativity as conceptualized by Duggan and on the impact of her intervention in the queer theoretical field. I locate here what I term a “Marxist renaissance” in queer theory. Kevin Floyd’s work in *The Reification of Desire: Toward a Queer Marxism* (2009) is exemplary of this reencounter between queer theory and Marxism. While the latter is taking shape against the background of the economic crisis exploded in 2008, and in relation to the more general return of Marxism on the intellectual scene of the Left, the “Marxist renaissance” in queer theory possesses its own specificities. Indeed, I suggest that this reencounter between the two critical paradigms is also a response to homonormativity. This means that one of the starting points for the emerging queer Marxism is the acknowledgment that queer sexuality and sexual politics are not necessarily sites of counter-hegemony, but rather are open to contradictory articulations. This acknowledgment, in turn, is strengthened by the intervention of queer of color critique, whose emergence is explicitly formulated by Roderick A. Ferguson in *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (2004). Indeed, in the tradition of black lesbian and intersectional feminism (see Combahee River Collective [1977] 1983; Hull, Bell Scott, and Smith 1982; Lorde 1984; Crenshaw 1989; 1991), queer of color critique insists that sexuality and sexual politics cannot be abstracted from their intersections with the axes of race and class. This chapter conceptualizes the emergence of a “Marxist renaissance” in queer theory and of queer of color critique in relation to the appearance of homonormativity in both the political and the theoretical field.

Central to my reading of these theoretical and political formations is a discussion of identity politics. Following both Hall and Duggan, I argue that identity politics are neither inherently progressive nor conservative. Rather, I suggest that they possess a relative autonomy which renders their articulation to specific political projects the result of concrete politico-ideological struggles. From this perspective, I question the current tendency on the part of many queer critics—including those participating in the

contemporary “Marxist renaissance” within the field—to regard identity exclusively as a result of the reification of social life under capitalism, especially in its neoliberal phase. On the one hand, I suggest that this reading privileges a focus on the “general laws” of capitalism, operating at a level of abstraction that sacrifices conjunctural analysis. On the other hand, I argue that to expel identity from the analysis, or to integrate it only as a target of polemic, makes it difficult to conceptualize the specific intervention of contemporary queer of color critique. Indeed, I propose to read the struggle around race conducted by the latter within the field of queer theory as a form of counter-hegemonic identity politics: a struggle to hegemonize the color line. To offer this reading, I conceptualize identity politics as a terrain of possible recomposition and as an expansive and intersectional field of antagonisms punctuated by forms of identifications and disidentifications.

In the first section of this chapter, I begin my discussion by rereading the well-known debate on redistribution and recognition between Judith Butler (1997b) and Nancy Fraser (1997b). I propose that the salience of the debate consists of having anticipated key developments in the field of queer theory, preparing the ground for Duggan’s intervention, while at the same time failing to register the specificities of the emerging conjuncture—first and foremost, the formation of homonormativity. I also argue that the lack of a theory of hegemony on both sides of the debate facilitated this failure. Hence, in the second section, I turn to Duggan’s analysis and I trace the multiple struggles for hegemony that have presided over the rearticulation of progressive sexual politics to the politico-economic project of neoliberalism in the United States. Following this analysis, in the third section I zoom in on the problem of identity and I suggest to conceptualize identity politics as an intersectional field of antagonisms and recomposition, rather than reducing identity to a mere by-product of capitalism or neoliberalism. This discussion proceeds in the fourth section, where I turn to the “Marxist renaissance” in queer theory. More specifically, I focus on the queer readings of György Lukács’ concepts of “reification” and “totality” offered by Rosemarie Hennessy in *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism* (2000) and by Kevin Floyd in *The Reification of Desire: Toward a Queer Marxism* (2009). Not only are these readings of Lukács pivotal to the contemporary reencounter between queer theory and Marxism, but they also reflect—at a high level of abstraction—a general problematic addressed by virtually all queer

Marxist critics today: how to approach the reification of identity under capitalism from a vantage point marked by sexual identity in the first place, and how to reconnect the politicization of sexual identity to an analysis of the social formation in its totality.

After discussing Hennessy's and Floyd's respective approaches to this problem, I turn to queer of color critique in the fifth section. Here, especially through a reading of José E. Muñoz's *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999) and of Roderick A. Ferguson's *Aberrations in Black: Toward A Queer of Color Critique* (2004), I argue that queer of color critique has been conducting a struggle to hegemonize the color line within the field of queer theory. In so doing, I suggest that this theoretical formation mediates today both our understanding of homonormativity and the current "Marxist renaissance" in queer theory. The chapter ends with a section devoted to the political life narrative of Gloria Wekker, an Afro-Dutch lesbian feminist whose participation in the intellectual and political scene in the Netherlands stretches from the 1970s to the present. Ferguson's project of a queer of color critique takes women of color and black lesbian feminism of the 1970s and 1980s as its genealogical anchoring point. Similarly, through Wekker's political life narrative, I recall the black lesbian feminist genealogy of contemporary Dutch antiracist organizing. Thus, on the one hand, I pose a question of political recomposition: do contemporary antiracist formations, rather than LGBTQ formations, constitute today a privileged site for the articulation of radical queer critiques of sexual politics? On the other hand, while addressing this question, I emphasize Wekker's struggles within the academic institution and the role played by such struggles in the circulation of intersectional critique inside and outside the university. In this way, I suggest that processes of political recomposition are often mediated by the seizing of institutional spaces—especially the spaces of knowledge production.

*Rereading Butler and Fraser:  
Missing the Gaps, Missing the Articulations*

In 1997, *Social Text* published a debate between Judith Butler and Nancy Fraser concerning the relation between the reproduction of capitalism and the regulation of sexuality—and, correspondingly, between socialist

politics and progressive sexual politics. The debate comprises Butler's essay "Merely Cultural" (1997b), originally delivered as a lecture at a *Rethinking Marxism* conference in Amherst, Massachusetts in 1996, and Fraser's reply, titled "Heterosexism, Misrecognition, and Capitalism: A Response to Judith Butler" (1997b). It is worth recalling the exchange between Butler and Fraser here, for it anticipates some of the contemporary debates that I discuss in this chapter: what I term, as a whole, the "Marxist renaissance" in queer theory. Such debates are redefining the field by revisiting, implicitly and explicitly, the relationship between queer theory and Marxism. This shift has been taking place through the past twenty years largely as a response to the emergence of what Duggan (2003) has termed "homonormativity": a sexual politics articulated to the politico-economic project of neoliberalism in the twenty-first century. The exchange between Butler and Fraser appears to anticipate and, at the same time, to be slightly out of tune with respect to such contemporary debates. Taking place shortly before the problem of homonormativity came to redefine the field of queer theory, I suggest that it proves significant due to the questions it raises as much as to its failure to answer them convincingly.

In her essay, Butler criticizes what she describes as an "orthodox Marxist" tendency to install a divide within the Left between socialist politics and cultural or identity politics, and to militate against the latter: "a tendency to relegate new social movements to the sphere of the cultural, indeed, to dismiss them as being preoccupied with what is called the 'merely' cultural, and then to construe this cultural politics as factionalizing, identitarian, and particularistic" (Butler 1997b, 265). According to Butler, queer struggles figure in this context as the quintessential example of the merely cultural (270). What led Fraser to respond to Butler in the first place is the fact that, rather than naming any of the "orthodox Marxists" who are the target of her polemical intervention, Butler chooses to direct her critique against Fraser's work in *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition* (Fraser 1997a). As Butler knows well, Fraser would by no means endorse a dismissal of identity politics on orthodox Marxist grounds. In fact, in *Justice Interruptus* and elsewhere, Fraser tries to elaborate a model for a united front of the Left combining what she terms "politics of redistribution" and "politics of recognition." She does so by proposing an ideal spectrum of political struggles ranging from the "economic" to the "cultural" and situating, for example, queer struggles at the cultural end of the spectrum. Once analytically parted

in this way, Fraser argues that these diverse struggles can only be kept together *normatively*, for each one of them stakes different and irreducible claims to justice that the Left *must not* ignore. While Butler shares the political commitments informing Fraser's work, she nonetheless argues that her model "reproduces the division that locates certain oppressions as part of political economy and relegates others to the exclusively cultural sphere" (Butler 1997b, 270-271). In other words, while Fraser's normative commitments to a diversity of political struggles clearly distinguish her from any economic dismissal of identity politics as merely cultural, her model reproduces, in Butler's view, the very partition between the economic and the cultural on which that dismissal depends in the first place.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, Butler offers different arguments in order not simply to defend cultural and identity politics as such, but to question the very epistemological divide between the material and the cultural. First, Butler points out how the exclusion of lesbians and gays from state-sanctioned notions of family, for example, has very material effects: the impossibility of inheriting a loved one's property, the impossibility of making medical decisions about a dying lover, and so forth (Butler 1997b, 273). Second, by recovering the vocabulary of 1970s socialist feminism and its critique of the sexual division of labor, Butler argues that heteronormativity is necessary to sustain the family as a site of reproduction of a gendered labor force functional to capitalism. It follows, Butler suggests, that "a movement concerned to criticize and transform the ways in which sexuality is socially regulated" also and automatically represents a threat to the functioning of the capitalist system (271). Finally, by briefly turning to classical anthropological works by Marcel Mauss and Claude Lévi-Strauss, Butler develops a third argument meant to deconstruct the boundary between the material and the cultural altogether. In her view, Mauss' and Lévi-Strauss' anthropological accounts of cultural practices of exchange—including the exchange of women—not only did reveal that such practices possess both material and cultural functions, but went further in demonstrating the analytical inefficacy of the very distinction between the two dimensions (275).

To the first argument, concerning the material aspects of lesbian and gay oppression, Fraser responds by pointing out that, according to her own model, misrecognition (that is, the domain of cultural and identity politics) is by no means immaterial, but rather depends on very material institutions and social practices. In Fraser's view, Butler confuses here the material (or economic) with the structural. From the fact that a form

of oppression has very clear material or economic dimensions does not follow, for Fraser, that we shall consider it as a direct expression of the economic structure. So she writes: “the economic harms of heterosexism [are] indirect (mal)distributive consequences of the more fundamental injustice of misrecognition. . . . Change the relations of recognition and the maldistribution would disappear” (Fraser 1997b, 283). For instance, grant gays and lesbians access to marriage and the impossibility of inheriting one’s partner’s property will disappear.

Thus, already at this stage Fraser’s response makes clear that at the core of this debate lie two different understandings of the relation between base and superstructures. This difference is properly developed in Fraser’s reply to Butler’s second argument. According to Fraser, Butler’s recovery of 1970s socialist feminism displays “an air of olympian indifference to history” (Fraser 1997b, 284) and resurrects the worse aspect of that theorizing: “the overtotalized view of capitalist society as a monolithic ‘system’ of interlocking structures of oppression that seamlessly reinforce one another” (285-286). In short, Fraser contests the idea that contemporary capitalism *needs* heteronormativity and that, consequently, LGBTQ struggles threaten the very functioning of capitalism as a coherent whole.<sup>4</sup> For Fraser, this view misses the gaps. She writes: “With its gaps between the economic order and the kinship order, and between the family and personal life, capitalist society now permits significant numbers of individuals to live through wage labor outside of heterosexual families” (285). More generally—and moving from the terrain of empirical observation to that of theoretical abstraction—it is the gaps between the different levels of the social formation (the economic, the political, and the ideological) that one must be able to identify in order to apprehend the social formation in question as a complex and contradictory yet articulated whole. At stake is the capacity to conceptualize the relation between the economic and the cultural in non-deterministic terms.

Butler tends to gloss over that relation. Through a loose deployment of terms such as “material” and “economic,” and through a more or less conscious recuperation of a functionalist logic from 1970s socialist feminism, she expands the domain of the economic base in order to include the social regulation of sexuality in it. Fraser, on the other hand, seems to be more attentive to the differentiations that characterize contemporary social formations. Yet her primary interest is not to track the articulatory practices that suture the gaps she identifies between the economic and the ideological levels (or, in her terms, between the economic order and the kinship order).

Rather, she names the gaps in order to reaffirm her normative commitment to heterogeneous struggles that must remain, in her view, analytically disarticulated. But that the links among the different levels of a social formation do not possess a necessary character and are not reducible to a seamless whole, as Fraser points out, does not automatically mean that such links do not exist. Following Hall, I suggest instead that such links are contingently established through politico-ideological practices which come to structure a particular social formation at a given historical juncture. By patrolling the borders between the different levels of the social formation rather than trying to identify the links contingently established among them, Fraser's conceptual edifice proves committed, as Butler argues, to preserve a distinction between the economic and the cultural.

This leads us to the third point of dissent between Butler and Fraser. To Butler's explicit deconstruction of the distinction between the material and the cultural, grounded on classical anthropological works, Fraser replies that those works concerned precapitalist societies to whose members the distinction in question was indeed not available. For, unlike modern capitalist societies, the ones investigated by Mauss and Lévi-Strauss were governed by systems of social relations that entirely collapsed kinship structures with practices of production and distribution (Fraser 1997b, 286). However, Fraser does not simply intend to counter Butler on historical grounds. Her observation immediately translates into a point of friction over theoretical practice:

Whatever [Mauss' and Lévi-Strauss'] intentions regarding "the economic" and "the cultural," we gain less from reading them as having "destabilized" the distinction than from reading them as having *historicized* it. . . . Butler's "destabilization" argument . . . erroneously assumes that to historicize a distinction is to render it nugatory and useless in social theory. In fact, historicization does the contrary. Far from rendering distinctions unstable, it renders their usage more precise. From my perspective, then, historicization represents a better approach to social theory than destabilization or deconstruction. (Fraser 1997b, 287)

We may interpret this friction over theoretical practice as conditioning, in fact, the entire debate between Butler and Fraser. Anna Marie Smith suggests as much in her reading of the debate. While discussing Fraser's charge against Butler's deployment of deconstruction, Smith observes:

“Butler does in fact deploy a classic Derridean interpretative strategy in her argument. She attempts to demonstrate that the economic cannot be analytically separated from the cultural because the latter operates as the ‘constitutive outside’ of the former. . . . Butler’s argument, however, actually bears a closer resemblance to structuralist Marxist thought” (A. Smith 2001a, 107). According to Smith, a deconstructive gesture is at work not only in Butler’s reading of Mauss and Lévi-Strauss, whose analyses she explicitly recovers in order to deconstruct the boundary between the material and the cultural, but also in Butler’s redeployment of 1970s socialist feminist arguments concerning the sexual division of labor. Thus, Smith collapses two different arguments proposed by Butler as signs of the same deconstructive approach.

Smith’s reading tries to do justice to the spirit of Butler’s intervention. As mentioned at the beginning, Butler’s entire essay—hence her reference to socialist feminism, too—is meant to deconstruct, indeed, the divide between the material and the cultural. Moreover, Smith’s reading manages to situate this debate within Butler’s broader intellectual trajectory. However, rather than identifying a singular logic throughout Butler’s essay (that is, deconstruction), we may gain more by insisting on her recourse to different and sometimes even conflicting conceptual apparatuses. In other words, I suggest that Butler does not simply develop a deconstructive argument that *resembles* Marxist functionalism or structuralism, as Smith suggests, but rather mobilizes at different points in her essay *both* deconstruction *and* functionalism with apparent disregard for their different and conflicting contributions to critical theory.<sup>5</sup> This reading opens up the possibility of a symptomatic reading of the debate, which situates it as a reflection of the relationship between queer theory and Marxism at the turn of the century. Indeed, as the contradictory nature of Butler’s essay makes clear, she approaches Marxism without belonging in it—as a temporary incursion.

In this chapter, I argue that the twenty-first century has been witnessing a key reencounter between queer theory and Marxism. Not that this encounter had not been conceptualized and practiced before, but in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, especially in its most visible strands, queer theory developed as a theoretical field emphatically disarticulated from Marxist theory. Michel Foucault’s critique of Marxism mentioned in the previous chapter, as well as his analysis of sexuality as a power device in its own right in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* ([1976] 1978), have certainly contributed to this development. Butler’s own work on gender

performativity is a quintessential instance of queer theory's departure from Marxism, not only but also via Foucault (Butler 1990; 1993a). From the beginning of the twenty-first century onward, instead, the relation between queer theory and Marxism has been granted unprecedented attention. Publications such as the conversation between Marcia Klotz, Rosemary Hennessy, and Kevin Floyd in *Rethinking Marxism* (Klotz 2006; Hennessy 2006; Floyd 2006) or *GLQ*'s special issue on "Queer Studies and the Crises of Capitalism" (Rosenberg and Villarejo 2012), among others, attest to the emergence of what I term the "Marxist renaissance" within the field.<sup>6</sup> In this chapter, I argue that such a reencounter between queer theory and Marxism has been taking root largely as a response to homonormativity: a sexual politics articulated to the politico-economic project of neoliberalism in its current phase.

That a return of Marxism in queer theory takes place at the time of an emerging articulation between LGBT politics and neoliberalism does make a difference. The relation between Marxism and queer theory has a history that predates their contemporary reencounter. On the one hand, there are theorists who have been positioning themselves at the crossroads of these two forms of critical knowledge since the 1980s and through the 1990s. Two cases in point are John D'Emilio's materialist analysis of the emergence of gay identity in his foundational essay "Capitalism and Gay Identity" (1983), and Rosemarie Hennessy's critique of the field of queer theory for its abstraction of gender and sexuality from the social relations of capitalism in "Queer Theory, Left Politics" (1994). On the other hand, a body of Marxist and socialist gay critique had already emerged within the gay liberation movements of the 1970s. Such is the case of the British Gay Left Collective formed in 1974 (see Gay Left Collective 1975) or the Gay Socialist Action Project formed in New York in 1974, in which D'Emilio himself participated. Moreover, the 1970s also witnessed an appropriation of the particular discourse of Freudo-Marxism at the hand of gay liberation authors and political collectives (see Mieli [1977] 1980).<sup>7</sup> Yet, even as this history and the forms of knowledge it produced are often recalled today as sources of political inspiration and genealogical affiliation, Nat Raha observes that the current body of work bringing queer theory and Marxism together *again* "remains largely removed from liberation-era gay left critique" (Raha 2014). Among other reasons, this is so because gay Marxist critics in the 1970s could take the unequivocal fact of gay oppression as a starting point and, like Butler in "Merely Cultural," they would posit gay

oppression and compulsory heterosexuality as necessary points of support for the reproduction of capitalism. The starting point for *contemporary* queer Marxism, instead, is the emergence of homonormativity, hence an acknowledgment of the openness of queer sexuality to contradictory political and ideological articulations.

This does not mean that contemporary queer theory must be reinvigorated or amended through a return to Marxism. Most of the authors discussed in this chapter make clear that a recuperation of Marxism within queer theory requires a partial disidentification from it in the first place, due to its historical disregard for sexual identity and sexual politics (see Ferguson 2004; Floyd 2009). In this respect, Butler's intervention is, paradoxically, out of tune. While her essay presents itself as a polemic against orthodox Marxism, she nonetheless seems to feel the urge, as Fraser correctly remarks, to prove the credentials of queer politics before an imaginary orthodox Marxist tribunal (Fraser 1997b, 281).<sup>8</sup> More generally, it is the entire debate between Butler and Fraser that appears to be, at least in part, out of tune. Taking place in the late 1990s, it fails to read convincingly its conjuncture and to anticipate key debates that will redefine the terrain of queer theory and politics after the turn of the century. Neither Butler's invocation of the necessity of heteronormativity for the reproduction of capitalist social relations nor Fraser's decoupling of socialist politics from identity politics can properly account for the struggles coagulating around the emergence of homonormativity.

Additionally, I argue in this chapter that the contemporary reencounter between queer theory and Marxism in the face of homonormativity is being crucially mediated by the intervention of queer of color critique. Also in this respect, the debate between Butler and Fraser fails to anticipate key transformations within the theoretical field, for both of their analyses evade the ways in which race mediates the articulations between sexual politics and neoliberalism. This absence is made even more striking by the fact that the debate was published in a double special issue of *Social Text* explicitly committed to intersectionality, titled "Queer Transexions of Race, Nation, and Gender" (Harper *et al.* 1997a). At the very beginning of their introduction, Philip Brian Harper, Anne McClintock, José E. Muñoz, and Trish Rosen write: "While the best work in [queer theory, postcolonial studies, and critical race theory] has emphasized that their objects of study cannot be understood in isolation from one another, the critical ramifications of this fact have nevertheless gone largely unexplored—a situation this

double issue is meant to address” (Harper *et al.* 1997b, 1). In the opening of her essay, Butler does allude to the intersections of feminist, antiracist, LGBTQ, and anti-capitalist formations. Her reading of these intersections pushes the analysis in a very interesting direction:

The only possible unity [of these formations] will not be the synthesis of a set of conflicts, but will be *a mode of sustaining conflict in politically productive ways*, a practice of contestation that demands that these movements articulate their goals under the pressure of each other without therefore exactly becoming each other. This is not quite the chain of equivalence proposed by Laclau and Mouffe, although it does sustain important relations to it. New political formations do not stand in an analogical relation with one another, as if they were discrete and differentiated entities. They are overlapping, mutually determining, and convergent fields of politicization. In fact, most promising are those moments in which one social movement comes to find its condition of possibility in another. (Butler 1997b, 269)

This passage invokes a politics of antagonism and alliance—that is, a politics of counter-hegemony—rooted in processes of recomposition that cross and intersect what may appear to be, at first glance, discrete political formations. I began to explore such processes at the end of the previous chapter, recovering the experience of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM). In order to construct an alliance with the miners on strike against the second Thatcher government in 1984-85, LGSM did not just insist on the analogies between gays and lesbians on the one hand, and the miners on the other hand. Rather, they positioned themselves at the crossroads of gay/lesbian identity and working-class belonging. Thus, Butler is right when she suggests that contemporary forms of recomposition taking place within the broad field of identity political formations go beyond Laclau and Mouffe’s conceptualization of a chain of equivalence. In this chapter, I continue this discussion by exploring the role played by contemporary queer of color critique in reorienting the field of queer theory around the problem of the color line.<sup>9</sup> While Butler points at these transformations in the passage above, she does not develop this reading in her subsequent analysis of the relations between sexual politics and capitalism. Duggan herself, who sides with Butler in her reading of the debate, nevertheless signals this point: “The future elaboration of Butler’s analysis . . . would need to offer an account that

addresses the centrality of racial differentiation, together with gender and sexuality, in the history of liberal capitalism in the West” (Duggan 2003, 84).

One must acknowledge that in 1997 Butler and Fraser lacked full access to the debate on homonormativity that was going to properly unfold few years after their debate took place. Fraser may seem to hint at the new scenario when she observes, against Butler, that “the principal opponents of gay and lesbian rights today are not multinational corporations, but religious and cultural conservatives. . . . In fact, some multinationals . . . apparently see advantages in accommodating gays” (Fraser 1997b, 285). Yet, as I argued, the search for gaps between the different levels of contemporary social formations works in Fraser as a point of arrival, not as a point of departure to identify the politico-ideological practices that are mobilized to suture those gaps. Reading the debate through the lens of Hall’s theory of hegemony and in light of the contemporary debate on homonormativity, I suggest that Butler misses the gaps but Fraser misses the articulations. Therefore, the exchange between them is not just out of tune with contemporary queer debates because of its taking place in the late 1990s. Its partial failure to read the transformations beginning to unfold, at the time, in the political *and* the theoretical field has also to do, as Smith points out, with the lack of a theory of hegemony.

Smith makes this point when she argues that Fraser’s critique of Butler must be reversed: “The problem with ‘Merely Cultural’ is not that it illegitimately introduces deconstruction into the terrain of social theory, but that its social theory is insufficiently poststructuralist” (A. Smith 2001a, 108).<sup>10</sup> Without explicitly mentioning it, Smith alludes to the contribution of authors such as Hall or Laclau and Mouffe.<sup>11</sup> Hence, she argues that a theory of hegemony would displace the very terms of the debate between Butler and Fraser. According to Smith, Fraser’s construction of a spectrum of political struggles ranging from the cultural to the economic, from recognition to redistribution, is far too abstract. For instance, Fraser affirms that the heterosexism of family law could be remedied either by legalizing same-sex marriage or by de-institutionalizing marriage as the basis for the allocation of benefits and privileges (Fraser 2000, 15; A. Smith 2001a, 118). Since Fraser disarticulates different struggles and addresses each of them separately according to her abstract model, the differences between those two strategies are irrelevant to her: both would eliminate the principle of misrecognition. Smith, instead, comments:

It is indeed possible that same-sex marriage might significantly disrupt patriarchal heterosexuality in one institutional context. In another, however, it might enlarge the privileged married class and contribute to the further marginalization of the unmarried class. As an isolated reform, same-sex marriage would not change the ways in which contemporary American welfare policies target single mothers for moral discipline on the basis of their marital status; nor would it do anything to ensure equal access to benefits for those individuals whose sexual practices and alternative kinship structures do not conform to the cohabiting monogamous couple model. In some conditions, the institutionalization of same-sex marriage—an apparently progressive reform—might actually contribute to new forms of domination. (A. Smith 2001a, 118)

This comment highlights that an apparently progressive sexual reform can help secure oppression in another domain, for even as the different levels of a given social formation do not stand in a relationship of pure reflection, they are nonetheless contingently articulated to one another.

Equally important, for Smith, is the fact that if marriage equality can be articulated to the hegemonic organization of social relations and its unequal distribution of privileges, it first needs to conduct a struggle for hegemony *within* the LGBTQ movement: it has to transform the movement. This is, indeed, one of the cores of Duggan’s analysis of homonormativity. How did that happen? Through which alliances and antagonisms? For Smith, Fraser’s abstract and static categorization of political struggles “does not give us the tools we need to analyze the way in which some demands become hegemonic within a given social movement—to the extent that they appear to sum up its entire identity—while others are neglected” (A. Smith 2001a, 119). In the next section, I recover Duggan’s analysis and emphasize the struggles of hegemony—taking place both inside LGBTQ formations and in the broader political field—which have presided over this rearticulation rightward of progressive sexual politics.

### *The Emergence of Homonormativity: Struggles for Hegemony*

In *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (2003), Duggan virtually takes up the analysis of the construction of neoliberal hegemony that Hall proposed in the context of

Thatcherism and, with a focus on the United States, drives it forward into the twenty-first century.<sup>12</sup> Yet, next to the different space-time coordinates of their analyses, there is at least one other element worth mentioning that distinguishes Hall's reading of Thatcherism from Duggan's discussion of contemporary neoliberalism. Hall understood both the urgency and the strategic relevance of the identity politics articulated by the new social movements in the 1970s and 1980s, yet he looked at them from a certain distance. Theoretically and politically, he fully *belonged* to the "first" New Left, emerged in the wake of 1956.<sup>13</sup> Duggan, instead, speaks from *within* contemporary feminist, queer, and antiracist movements. Thus, while Hall called for the Left to open up its language and programs to the politics of gender, race, and sexuality but referred to such movements mostly in the third person, Duggan directly addresses feminist, queer, and antiracist formations. The field defined by these movements themselves and their intersections figures in her work as a terrain of hegemonic struggles.

In other words, Hall's and Duggan's different vantage points influence their respective analyses. Duggan pays attention, like Hall did, to the tensions between socialist politics and identity politics, but she does so primarily by insisting on how such tensions translate into antagonisms *within* feminist, queer, and antiracist formations. If Hall warned that the failure of the Left to occupy the emerging field of identity politics would lead, in the 1980s, to their conservative articulation by Thatcherism, Duggan's work takes a step further and diagnoses the contemporary articulation rightward of apparently *progressive* sexual politics. The politics of homonormativity—a politics primarily invested in formal equality, stripped of redistributive goals, and adverse to the construction of alliances that would link LGBTQ struggles to other identity political formations such as feminist and antiracist movements—is a politics actively articulated by key segments of the LGBTQ movement. While in Hall's writings of the 1980s identity politics figures primarily as a terrain to be seized in the struggle for hegemony between a Left in crisis and a rising New Right, Duggan's analysis fully triangulates that relationship and regards identity political formations themselves as central participants in the struggle. The problem of homonormativity emerges at the crossroads of three terrains of antagonism: a) the crisis of the post-war social consensus around the welfare state and the rise of the New Right in its wake; b) the conflicts within the Left between socialist politics and identity politics; and c) the antagonisms taking root *within* and *among* identity political formations.

The histories of these different yet articulated terrains of antagonism form the background of Duggan's analysis of homonormativity.

Like Hall, Duggan identifies in the crisis of the post-war social consensus around the Keynesian welfare state a first phase in the process that would lead to the rise of a New Right in the 1970s. According to her account, the decades of the 1950s and 1960s were characterized in the United States by a first round of consistent attacks on the New Deal, on progressive unionism, and in general on the principle of redistribution downward. Proceeding into the next decade, such conservative attacks were directed against *both* the welfare state *and* the new social movements—Black Power, feminism, gay and lesbian liberation, and the counterculture. It is important to observe, as mentioned in the previous chapter following Hall's account, that the very emergence of these new social movements signaled the unfolding of a crisis in the previous social formation. Indeed, those movements explicitly articulated their own critique of the welfare state because of its depoliticizing effects and the forms of inequality and social regulation that, in their view, it helped preserve. Duggan writes: "During the 1950s and 1960s, criticism of the U.S. welfare state from both the right and the left intensified. Conservative antistatist attacks on New Deal social welfare programs mounted, as the new social movements pressed from the left for more equitable distribution of many kinds of resources" (Duggan 2003, xi). Many of the emerging social movements were primarily organized around identity and often deployed modes of analysis that either aimed to supplement Marxism or departed from it altogether.<sup>14</sup> However, despite such ideological departures, as well as the divergences concerning political vision and tactics and the conflicts over the most significant sites of oppression, those movements, as Duggan points out, "might be conceptualized as overlapping, interrelated (if conflicted) *cultures of downward redistribution*. . . . [T]he overall emphasis . . . was the pressure to level hierarchies and redistribute *down*—redistribute money, political power, cultural capital, pleasure, and freedom" (xvii). In other words, redistribution and recognition, in Fraser's terms, formed an heterogeneous but unified terrain.

The new social movements, Duggan follows, were confronted throughout the 1970s not only by traditional conservative formations opposing both redistributive justice and cultural transformation, but also by a new pro-business activism taking shape in the more specific context of increasing globalization and falling profit rates for corporations based in the United States. In this context, "previously conflicting big and small

business interests increasingly converged, and business groups organized to redistribute resources *upward*” (Duggan 2003, xii). At the same time, a partly overlapping movement of “neoconservatives” emerged, composed of former liberals and leftists who now turned rightward and articulated a wholesale rejection not just of Stalinism, but also of the New Left and the new social movements. Similarly to what was happening in Britain at the time, these new right-wing formations in the United States had first to conduct a struggle for hegemony *within* the conservative camp: “Traditional conservatives . . . did not easily accept the neocons, who had too recently been tarnished with liberal leanings. But the merging of the neocons into the conservative political and intellectual movement in the United States during the 1980s, along with the election of Ronald Reagan to the presidency, helped to push the perceived ‘center’ in American politics rightward” (9). Thus, the crisis of the New Deal social consensus began to unfold in the 1950s and culminated with the seizing of political power, in the early 1980s, by a transformed Republican Party that would embrace the politico-economic project of neoliberalism: less welfare, more “law and order,” and privatization.

In terms of cultural politics, the 1980s inaugurated a season of so-called “culture wars.” As in Britain, the neoliberal bloc in the United States at first built alliances with religious conservatives, nationalists, and white supremacists, thus launching attacks on the LGBTQ community (notably at the time of the AIDS crisis), feminism, and racialized formations, as well as on progressive programs that had begun to appear in the universities as the intellectual offspring of those very social movements: women’s studies, ethnic studies, and gay and lesbian studies.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, the LGBTQ movement itself started to fragment and recompose:

During the 1980s, as standards of living dropped in the United States and global inequalities expanded, social movements responded to multiple constrains and pressures in part by fragmenting, in part by accommodating to the narrowing horizons of fundraising imperatives, legal constrains, and the vice grip of electoral politics. . . . Single-group or single-issue organizations dedicated to lobbying, litigation, legislation, or public and media education had existed earlier *as only one part* of larger, shaping social movements. . . . But during the 1980s, such organizations—known collectively as the “civil rights lobby”—began to appear as the parts that replaced the wholes. (Duggan 2003, xviii)

Duggan remarks that “the remnants of the 1960s and 1970s social movements, together with the identity-based organizations and civil rights establishment of the 1980s, remained cultures of downward distribution—even if in a less generally radical sense during the 1980s” (Duggan 2003, xix).<sup>16</sup> However, it is clear that the political culture of the LGBTQ movement began to transform and especially a broader progressive horizon started receding. Duggan notes that, throughout the 1980s, the more transformative segments of the movement survived not only, but also “in a growing library of progressive-left intellectual and scholarly projects and publications” (xix), that is, in the march through the academic institution. And it is precisely this process of academic institutionalization that became one of the central terrains of struggle during the culture wars. Advocates of neoliberalization waged an attack on progressive university programs by “positioning ‘liberals’ and progressives in colleges and universities as simultaneously ‘elitist’ and ‘alien,’ in populist mode, and as sucking up taxpayer dollars to support cultures of downward redistribution—multiculturalism, Marxism, ‘theory,’ and feminism particularly. Sex panic strategies . . . played a crucial role as well” (40). In other words, the access gained by progressive formations to the academic institution provided an opportunity for the neoliberal bloc to articulate its economic project through moral panics and anti-intellectual populist campaigns.

The phase of the culture wars inaugurated in the 1980s proceeded into the 1990s, hand in hand with the increasing ascendancy of neoliberalism. For instance, Duggan devotes an entire chapter of *The Twilight of Equality?* to a significant public controversy erupted on the occasion of the feminist conference ‘Revolting Behavior: The Challenges of Women’s Sexual Freedom,’ organized at the State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz in 1997. The controversy was initiated by SUNY trustee Candace de Russy, who spoke out as a catholic Republican and on behalf of concerned citizens against the sexual perversion promoted by the conference and by the women’s studies program organizing it. De Russy easily managed to involve key political figures in the controversy, most notably New York Republican governor George Pataki, who was behind her appointment as SUNY trustee in the first place. Not only did the incident rapidly escalate and turned into a broad public debate, but the conservative campaign adopted a specific target beyond the conference as such: the president of the SUNY New Paltz campus Roger Bowen. This is significant because, as Duggan highlights, de Russy formed part of a number of activists that

Pataki had pushed into the SUNY board of trustees in order to facilitate the neoliberalization of the university. As such, she had already voted against the appointment of Bowen as president of the SUNY New Paltz campus in 1996, for Bowen “considered himself aligned with the classic values of academic culture, understood as uneasily at odds with political and economic values” (Duggan 2003, 33). Therefore, he was regarded by others “as something of a holdout in the zealous campaign to corporatize SUNY” (33). The controversy over the feminist conference in 1997 offered a new occasion to undermine his position.

However, while Bowen himself, when resigning in 2001, publicly addressed the political forces that had been militating against public education in New York for a decade, in 1997 the conference was defended by him and by progressive segments of civil society inside and outside the university mostly on the grounds of academic freedom. According to Duggan, this defense—which is legitimate in its own right—nonetheless failed to provide an analysis of the articulation between this particular controversy and the broader neoliberal attack launched at the time on public education; that is, it failed to point out that culture wars are not just about “culture”:

Only a response that exposed the links in the chain of attack from culture to politics to economics, and that forged its own links, operating to stimulate the flow of resources in the opposite direction, might have succeeded—not only in defusing the specific attack, but in building a sustainable progressive opposition. A sustainable opposition would need to connect culture, politics, and economics; identity politics and class politics; universalist rhetoric and particular issues and interests; intellectual and material resources. (Duggan 2003, 41)

Duggan’s reading of this 1997 public controversy allows her to emphasize the articulation of allegedly “cultural” antagonisms to the politico-economic project of neoliberalism. However, she also observes that, by the end of the 1990s, this culture wars strategy was in fact a residual one. With the emergence of the New Democrats and the election of Bill Clinton to the presidency in 1993, the neoliberal bloc had begun to recompose, shifting its cultural politics along with its system of alliances: “Neoliberalism’s emergent strategy for the new millennium: A new ‘equality’ politics compatible with a corporate world order” (Duggan 2003, 42). To be sure, the shift was contradictory and uneven. For example, while Clinton promised to advance

and protect the rights of LGBT people during his electoral campaign, not only did his administration in 1994 institute the infamous “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policy allowing gays, lesbians, and bisexuals to serve in the military only if remaining in the closet, but in 1996 he also signed into law the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). The DOMA defined marriage as the union of a man and a woman at the federal level and allowed states not to recognize same-sex marriages contracted in other states.<sup>17</sup>

Yet, by integrating a discourse of civil rights and equality, no matter how superficial and only partially implemented at first, the New Democrats in fact shifted the ideological apparatus of the neoliberal bloc in a direction that would prepare its current phase in terms of cultural politics: a multicultural politics of equality stripped of redistributive aims. Key segments of the LGBTQ movement participated in, rather than oppose, this reconfiguration of the politico-ideological field. The transformation of the neoliberal bloc was paralleled in the 1990s by a transformation of the movement as well. According to Duggan, while the 1980s had already witnessed a process of fragmentation and the emergence of a “civil rights lobby” in part detached from grassroots activist formations, and disarticulated from other progressive social movements, throughout the 1990s “some organizations within the ‘civil rights lobby’ narrowed their focus and moved dramatically to the right, accommodating rather than opposing the global inequalities generated by neoliberalism” (Duggan 2003, xix). It is certainly the case of the Human Rights Campaign, for instance, which during the 1980s had already begun to emerge as the most prominent gay and lesbian political lobbying organization in the United States and in 1992, for the first time, explicitly entered electoral politics by endorsing Clinton’s presidential candidacy.

Duggan emphasizes the political and ideological practices presiding over these realignments. Alexandra Chasin, instead, argues that this shifting of the politico-ideological terrain must be understood also in light of the unprecedented engagement of the LGBTQ movement with the market, in the United States, throughout the 1990s. In *Selling Out: The Gay and Lesbian Movement Goes to Market* (2000), Chasin observes first and foremost that an increasing engagement with the market helped projecting the movement onto the national scale. This inaugurated, ideologically, a novel identification of gays and lesbians with Americanness, yet one that would not entirely require the erasure of their particular sexual identities. For, in Chasin’s view, the market—especially the niche markets emerged in the 1970s but exploded in the 1990s—“is the prime mechanism for defusing

the conflict between sameness and difference, or between assimilation and de-assimilation” (109). However, according to her, this investment into the market articulated and intensified a number of antagonisms *within* the movement itself: not only between national organizations and grassroots local formations, but also along lines of class, gender, and race.

In order to develop this argument, Chasin analyzes various sites of the new articulation between the LGBTQ movement and the market. On the one hand, the discourse about the “pink dollar,” which first emerged in the 1970s but gained significant traction in the 1990s, explicitly posed the disenfranchisement of gays and lesbians as a potential opening for marketers. Thus, it offered the market as a solution to political inequality, that is, as an alternative point of access to the national community. Yet, in order to do so, this discourse—developed by market analysts, journalists, and advertisers but taken up by segments of the LGBTQ community as well, particularly the gay and lesbian press—misrepresented the gay and lesbian population as an homogeneous affluent class: a representation organized around the figure of the white middle-class gay man alone (Chasin 2000, 38-39). On the other hand, the organizational structures of the LGBTQ movement morphed. It is during the 1990s that the movement became part and parcel of what has been termed, in the United States, the “non-profit industrial complex” (see Mananzala and Spade 2008; INCITE! 2009). Chasin demonstrates that with the rapid emergence of large non-profit organizations such as the Human Rights Campaign, dependent on corporate funding and big donors, the politics and ideology of the movement shifted. First, corporations and foundations prefer to fund national centrist and liberal organizations as well as less controversial projects, at the expense of local grassroots organizing. Second, the dependency on such sources of funding tends to sideline the relationship of accountability between LGBTQ organizations and their base, favoring the relationship with donors themselves—mostly white rich men (Chasin 2000, 190-210).<sup>18</sup>

Chasin’s account specifies some of the mechanisms through which the LGBTQ movement in the 1990s became increasingly hegemonized, as Duggan observes, by large political lobbying organizations disarticulated from feminist and antiracist movements and indifferent to economic justice. While the movement, so transformed, tended to converge politically with Clinton’s Democratic Party, the 1990s also witnessed the emergence of a small yet vocal contingent of openly gay neoliberals close to the Republican Party: the Log Cabin Republicans (LCR). Surina Khan discusses this

emerging formation in “Gay Conservatives: Pulling the Movement to the Right” (1996). Khan terms LCR “gay conservatives”: “Gay conservatives, like their heterosexual counterparts, generally reject welfare and affirmative action, and are opposed to immigration. They have strong libertarian leanings in that they believe in limited government, individual rights, and individual ‘responsibility’—values they claim to share with the majority of American people” (1). Like the neoconservatives before them in the 1970s and 1980s, gay conservatives—or, more accurately, gay neoliberals—have found themselves engaged in a struggle to secure their position within Republican ranks: on the one hand, trying to convince Republicans of the value of the “gay vote”; on the other hand, articulating ideologically a commitment to limited government intervention in *both* the economy *and* private (sexual) life (3). As Khan warned already in 1996, “the gay conservative movement is growing at a fast pace, garnering a great deal of mainstream media attention in the process, and serving as an active part of the Right in attacking gay progressive institutions” (1). Thus, in her view, even though this formation formed a relatively small segment of the LGBTQ movement, it should not be dismissed as a fringe group.

Indeed, while militating to secure their position within the neoliberal bloc and the Republican Party, gay neoliberals have waged their own culture wars *within* the LGBTQ movement. Khan reports the significant case of the attack launched against the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center, a progressive institution devoted to alliance politics and run by a racially diverse staff in San Antonio, Texas. The campaign against Esperanza was led by Glenn Stehle, editor of the gay publication *The Marquise*, and attacked both the center’s commitment to diversify LGBTQ organizing along intersecting lines of race, class, and gender and its displaying of allegedly “obscene” art. As Khan recalls, although some protests had already appeared on *The Marquise* through the past two years, it was in 1995, when San Antonio councilman Roger Perez appointed a person from Esperanza to the city’s Cultural Arts Board, that the campaign intensified. Stehle wrote a letter to Perez and then reprinted it on his magazine:

You choose the most blasphemous, obscene, racist and anti-American group in town to award city monies and thus legitimize [Esperanza] as exemplary of the gay and lesbian population. I am here to tell you, Mr. Perez, that not all gays and lesbians are Marxist, nor do we all subscribe to the theories of French poststructuralism. . . . We don’t go around

picking fights with the Catholic church nor any other religious or secular group in town with our loudmouthed in-your-face histrionics. In the political spectrum, [the lesbian and gay community] voted more Republican than the Jewish, Black and Hispanic populations in the last election. (Stehle, quoted in Khan 1996, 9)

Of course, as many other culture wars, the one involving Esperanza was not just about “culture.” The campaign, which lasted several years, articulated a condemnation of sexually explicit art and a rejection of Esperanza’s alliance politics to a critique of the management of public money. Finally, the campaign was successful in getting Esperanza defunded (see also Chasin 2000, 229-233; Duggan 2003, 54-55; Ramirez 2015).

It is while discussing such formations of openly gay neoliberals that Duggan coins the concept of homonormativity. In *The Twilight of Equality?*, she focuses on the Independent Gay Forum (IGF), an online writers’ group close to LCR and positioning itself as a “third way” against both Republican homophobia and LGBTQ progressive politics. The group, which no longer exists as such, was composed of public intellectuals and academics such as Andrew Sullivan, Bruce Bawer, and Stephen O. Murray. Like LCR, members of IGF ideologically support the politico-economic project of neoliberalism as the best terrain on which gay emancipation can advance. In terms of concrete political goals, their platform focuses on granting gays and lesbians access to key institutions such as marriage and the military. As Duggan puts it, IGF—and neoliberal gay formations in general—works to redefine gay equality “as access to the institutions of domestic privacy, the ‘free’ market, and patriotism” (Duggan 2003, 51). The concept of homonormativity, in Duggan’s original formulation, is meant to signal this rearticulation.

While Khan and Duggan pay attention to the emergence of similar politico-ideological formations, they provide slightly different analyses. Khan’s article ends on the following note: “Gay conservatives do not see the limits and, indeed, the dangers of identity-based politics centered only around gay rights” (Khan 1996, 10). But actually, as her own previous account of the attack on Esperanza shows, the operations of homonormativity are not the unfortunate by-product of identity or even single-issue politics, but an explicit articulation of gay politics adverse to progressive alliances and aligned with upward redistribution. Duggan observes: “Often misunderstood and criticized by progressive activists as single issue politics . . . national

gay civil rights politics in the new millennium is actually developing as the ‘gay equality’ branch of multi-issue neoliberalism” (Duggan 2003, 47). Urvashi Vaid made a similar point during a keynote speech she delivered in 1998 precisely at the Annual Convention of the Log Cabin Republican Clubs, later collected in her book *Irresistible Revolution: Confronting Race, Class and the Assumptions of LGBT Politics* (2012). In her speech, Vaid addresses the audience of gay neoliberals: “at the same time as progressives are criticized for championing these ‘other’ issues [racism, death penalty, women’s reproductive rights], you here at Log Cabin actively promote your support for your own ‘other’ issues, like lower taxes, welfare reform, and opposition to affirmative action” (109-110). Indeed, as both Duggan and Khan observe, antagonisms between radical and assimilationist segments have existed within the LGBTQ movement since its inception (Khan 1996, 3-4; Duggan 2003, 51-53). What distinguishes the politics of homonormativity is not just an assimilationist ethos, but its articulation to the broader politico-economic project of neoliberalism.<sup>19</sup>

In 1996, Khan could still wonder “what impact will gay conservatives have on the gay movement” (Khan 1996, 3). And Duggan could affirm, in 2003, that “if they succeed in wresting the constituencies for identity politics further away from the progressive-left, enfolding a larger proportion of these populations within neoliberal alliances, the result would be a major realignment in U.S. politics” (Duggan 2003, 44-45). Today, one has to register that in part that realignment has been carried out successfully, not only in the United States. While the struggle for the hegemony of neoliberalism is definitely *not* closed—especially in the context of the politico-economic crisis unfolding since 2008—the most influential segments of the LGBTQ movement across the global North (the so-called “mainstream”) often seem to be the least interested in joining the construction of a broader counter-hegemony. However, it bears repeating, the struggle is not closed. In the face of homonormativity and its hegemonizing effects inside and outside the LGBTQ movement, Duggan calls for “an interconnected, analytically diverse, cross-fertilizing and expansive left [that] can seize this moment to lead us elsewhere, to newly imagined possibilities for equality in the twenty-first century” (Duggan 2003, xxii). The counter-hegemonic bloc she imagines, similarly to the one imagined by Hall in the 1980s, must operate not only but also on the politico-ideological terrain of identity politics. This is one of the core arguments running throughout *The Twilight of Equality?* In Duggan’s

view, “a broad understanding of the neoliberal project . . . will be blocked as long as leftists and campaigners for economic justice dismiss cultural and identity politics as marginal, trivial, or divisive” (3). And this is so because, as her narrative of the construction of neoliberal hegemony in the United States shows, in each phase of the process neoliberalism has been articulated *through* cultural and identity politics.

According to Duggan, identity politics have been integral to the relative success of neoliberalism also because the shifting array of alliances deployed by the neoliberal bloc has been met with insufficient analyses on the Left. While economic reform was being constructed as neutral by the supporters of neoliberalization and the political antagonism was entirely projected on the alternative between Democrats and Republicans, “activists and intellectuals on the progressive-left, operating outside the terms of two party neoliberalism, fell more deeply into unproductive battles over economic versus cultural politics, identity-based vs. left universalist rhetoric, theoretical critiques vs. practical organizing campaigns” (Duggan 2003, xix). This is, indeed, the problem addressed by Butler in “Merely Cultural.” Duggan pushes Butler’s critique of left-wing orthodoxy further and complements it with an analysis of the emergence of homonormativity. Hence, she argues that the antagonisms within the Left between identity and socialist politics, recognition and redistribution, have actively contributed to the increasing ascendancy of neoliberalism:

On one side, the identity politics camps are increasingly divorced from any critique of global capitalism. Some organizations and groups creep into the neoliberal fold, shedding downwardly redistributing goals for a stripped-down equality, paradoxically imagined as compatible with persistent overall inequality. . . . On the other side, critiques of global capitalism and neoliberalism, and left populist or universalist politics within the U.S., attack and dismiss cultural and identity politics at their peril. Such attacks strip them of prime sources of political creativity and new analyses, and leave them uncomprehending before the cultural and identity politics of the opposition. In addition, they drive constituencies seeking equality away, toward the false promises of superficial neoliberal “multiculturalism.” (Duggan 2003, xx)

In the concluding chapter of *The Twilight of Equality?*, Duggan examines the dismissal of both identity politics and its theoretical counterpart,

cultural studies, across contemporary forms of left-wing universalism, economism, and populism—from 2000 Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader (2002) to journalist and writer Naomi Klein (2000), from new media scholar Todd Gitlin (1995) to philosopher Richard Rorty (1998). Paradoxically, as she observes, “critiques of ‘identity politics’ have [also] come from within . . . the political formations generally designed by this term” (Duggan 2003, 79). That is, some feminist, queer, and antiracist critics have joined others on the Left in dismissing identity politics not only as divisive, but as agents that “naturalize” capitalism, especially in its current neoliberal phase. Such critiques are stimulated by similar preoccupations as the ones informing Duggan’s own critique of homonormativity. Yet, as she argues, rather than engaging in conjunctural analysis, the critiques of identity politics articulated by feminist, queer, and antiracist commentators (as much as those formulated by others on the Left) regularly proceed by “abstracting some overall or general effect of ‘identity politics’ from its most conservative/neoliberal instantiations” rather than “keeping the most radically transformative and creative moments at the forefront of political analysis” (79). In her view, this allows the critic to assume a pedagogical position vis-à-vis the social forces that form the object of their analysis.<sup>20</sup> Following Duggan, in the next section I propose some reflections on identity politics, in order to conceptualize the latter as an intersectional and expansive field of antagonisms and recomposition, rather than just a function and by-product of the reification of social and political life under capitalism in its neoliberal phase.

### *The Problem of Identity Politics*

Since the time of Duggan’s writing, hand in hand with the increasing hegemony of homonormativity as a politico-ideological articulation and as a theoretical problem for queer theory, queer critiques of identity politics have, not surprisingly, proliferated. Many of the authors discussed in this dissertation—such as Kevin Floyd (2009), Roderick A. Ferguson (2004), and Jasbir K. Puar (2007)—offer sophisticated arguments to question the efficacy of identity politics.<sup>21</sup> Yet in most cases, the critique of identity has reached such a level of common sense (for the critic) that it often gets reiterated just as a generic call to move “beyond” identity politics. Consider the following contradictory passage with which Chasin opens

her otherwise illuminating work on the articulations between the LGBTQ movement and the market in the United States:

These pages point beyond identity politics . . . at the same time that the very existence of this book proves that identity politics and identity-based production and consumption have changed social institutions in dramatic, and sometimes progressive, ways. My work is not a condemnation of identity politics, any more than it is a denial of the fact that legal rights are necessary tools for freedom and equality. This work does, however, make the argument that rights, while necessary, are insufficient—and that identity politics is, in turn, inadequate—to the task of building a movement for social justice. (Chasin 2000, xvii)

The movement for social justice that Chasin imagines is very similar to the one envisioned by Duggan. However, she seems to regard identity politics to be insufficient or even inadequate to the construction of a broad counter-hegemonic bloc, even as she acknowledges that her own political and intellectual positioning (as a queer feminist writer) is marked by identity in the first place and is *made possible* by the seizing of institutional spaces at the hand of identity formations. Her critique of identity politics proceeds from the fact that the latter are made to overlap, in her argument, with single-issue political projects unilaterally invested into the claiming of rights. Aware of the common gesture of reducing the vast terrain of identity politics only to its most recent and less productive concretions, Duggan argues: “*Identity politics*, in the contemporary sense of the rights-claiming focus of balkanized groups organized to pressure the legal and electoral systems for inclusion and redress, appeared [in the 1980s] out of the field of disintegrating social movements” (Duggan 2003, xviii). But “*identity politics* in the broadest sense arises from the exclusions of the . . . nation-state beginning in the early nineteenth century” (89, n4). According to this second definition, identity politics is a name for all intellectual and political projects that foreground the salience of race, gender, and sexuality (among other axes) for the organization of social relations and the exercise of power: first and foremost, state power.

Because identity politics are often made to overlap with single-issue civil rights lobbying organizations, some critics identify intersectionality as a form of anti-identity intellectual and political practice. The concept of intersectionality was coined by Kimberlé W. Crenshaw in

“Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics” (1989), yet on a terrain prepared by a significant amount of political and theoretical work by women of color and black lesbian feminists before her (see Combahee River Collective [1977] 1983; hooks 1982; Hull, Scott, and Smith 1982; Lorde 1984). In Crenshaw’s formulation, the concept of intersectionality points at the insufficiency of analyses and political practices that do not attend to the position of those situated at the crossroads of multiple axes of oppression and fronts of antagonism. However, Crenshaw’s early essay already suggested that intersectionality does not criticize identity politics as such, but rather its historically specific failures to articulate identities that are irreducible to the single axes of gender *or* race *or* class *or* sexuality. The relationship between intersectionality and identity politics is fully addressed in her later essay, titled “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and the Violence Against Women of Color” (1991). Here, Crenshaw explicitly situates intersectionality as an intervention *within* the broad terrain of identity politics:

If . . . history and context determine the utility of identity politics, how then do we understand identity politics today, especially in light of our recognition of multiple dimensions of identity? More specifically, what does it mean to argue that gender identities have been obscured in antiracist discourses, just as race identities have been obscured in feminist discourses? Does that mean we cannot talk about identity? Or instead, that any discourse about identity has to acknowledge how our identities are constructed through the intersection of multiple dimensions? (Crenshaw 1991, 1299)

For Crenshaw, the right answer is obviously the latter. In fact, identity politics and intersectionality are not only compatible, as she suggests, but also genealogically bound to each other. One of the first explicit references to identity politics is to be found in the famous statement by the black lesbian feminist Combahee River Collective, which virtually inaugurated the contemporary tradition of intersectional critique. They wrote: “We realize that the only people to care enough about us to work consistently for our liberation are us. . . . This focusing upon our own oppression is embodied in the concept of identity politics. . . . We believe that sexual

politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in Black women's lives as are the politics of class and race" (Combahee River Collective [1977] 1983, 274). In this passage, identity politics figures as something different from what has become the routine target of contemporary queer critiques.

Thus, without trying to "police" contemporary attempts to deploy intersectionality as a critique of identity politics, it is nonetheless worth registering the theoretical and political contradictions that they entail. Such contradictions are evident, for instance, in Marie Moran's *Identity and Capitalism* (2015), which offers an otherwise enlightening account of the emergence of identity in the contemporary social and political fields, inspired by the cultural materialist work of Raymond Williams.<sup>22</sup> Moran recalls that the Combahee River Collective offered one of the first explicit formulations of identity politics, yet she positions the collective within the radical women's liberation movement of the time without registering the intersectional critique that it put forward (112). Upon quoting the statement of the collective, she comments: "As was the case with Black Power, the Women's Liberation Movement was not content with equal rights before the law, nor indeed with simple cultural recognition of their specificity, as the label 'identity politics' is now sometimes taken to imply. Instead, they used the idea of a shared identity to organise vigorously for substantive political, social and economic equality too" (113). Thus, Moran does notice that the formulation of identity politics by the Combahee River Collective in 1977 sharply differs from the way in which the notion circulates today among its critics. However, she entirely circumvents the fact that the collective participated in the broader feminist movement as much as in the construction of an intersectional front of antagonism within it. This allows her, later in the same chapter, to construct intersectionality as a "crisis of identity" and, at the same time, as a critical intervention which nonetheless "further consolidates the very notion of identity" (121), by intersecting rather than deconstructing its different axes. This reading depends not only on Moran's previous elision of the intersectional intervention of the Combahee River Collective, but also on a privileging of theoretical abstraction over concrete intersectional practices—hence her reference to the underlying "essentialism" of intersectionality.

Instead, by emphasizing the genealogical link between identity politics and intersectionality and keeping in mind the concrete political and theoretical work performed by intersectional critique—such as the protest staged by Black Lives Matter at the Toronto Pride in July 2016,

mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation—I propose to understand intersectionality as one of the best instances of an expansive identity politics. More broadly, I suggest to conceptualize identity politics as an expansive and intersectional field of antagonisms and recomposition: a field punctuated by forms of identifications and disidentifications which acknowledge the salience of gendered, racialized, and sexual formations (among others), mobilize social forces emerging from such formations and at their intersections, and thus interrupt the exclusionary universalisms that have historically organized the Western political field.

This reading suggests that rather than moving *beyond* or even *against* it, the terrain of identity politics must be seized and articulated—not just to honor its history, as some critics seem to suggest, but for several reasons that continue to be pertinent today: a) as Duggan argues, and as Hall argued before her, the neoliberal bloc articulates its politico-economic project *through* identity and cultural politics; b) as Duggan points out, identity political formations define today a privileged terrain for the emergence of an effective counter-hegemony: “without the analytic and organizing energy found within the identity-based political formations, the progressive-left has no hope of effectively grasping the forces it seeks to arrest and reverse—those promoting antidemocratic inequality on multiple fronts” (Duggan 2003, 71); c) discourses and experiences of identity form a field of common sense, that is, people do *identify* with them. As such, the problem of identity cannot be easily dismissed by any counter-hegemonic ideological discourse that aspires to materialize as a meaningful social force; d) the mobilization of intersectional identities *within* identity political formations—for instance, the mobilization of race within LGBTQ formations—constitutes not only a key point of support for a critique of homonormativity, but also a privileged point of access to a very understanding of the problem. As the culture war waged against the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center in the 1990s shows, the gay neoliberal attack on progressive LGBTQ formations is primarily mediated by an attack on the practicing of antiracist coalitions within such formations.<sup>23</sup>

To the points mentioned above, we should add the fact that a refusal to politicize identity is precisely one of the cornerstones of homonormativity. For example, Duggan quotes IGF member Andrew Sullivan: “we have now to be political in order to be prepolitical. . . . In the same way that many of us had to leave our families in order to join them again, so now as citizens, we have to embrace politics if only ultimately to be free of

it” (Sullivan, quoted in Duggan 2003, 62). Chasin makes the same argument even more explicitly. Referencing Sullivan and others as “gay libertarians,” she observes that “within gay and lesbian media, some of the most vociferous objections to identity politics are founded in a supreme belief in individualism” and in the idea that identity politics cannot make people happy, for “the pursuit of happiness takes place in the private arena” (Chasin 2000, 222-223). Against the depoliticization of sexuality and sexual identity promoted by the gay segment of the neoliberal bloc, a counter-hegemonic critique might insist that sexual identity *is* political, especially when located within the field of its intersectional ramifications.

Queer theorists and activists who insist today on a *necessary* relation between homonormativity and identity politics, hence rejecting the latter in order to resist the former, usually point at the *reification* of identity under capitalism, particularly in its contemporary neoliberal phase. For example, Chasin emphasizes: “If industrial and postindustrial capitalism have enabled us to imagine locating component parts of our identities where we are unfree and unequal . . . they have also encouraged us to imagine our oppression *partially* and to design our liberation accordingly” (Chasin 2000, 18-19). Sexual identity is understood to have found its very conditions of possibility, at least in part, *within* capitalism. To this extent, in typical Marxist terms, capitalism is granted a historic liberatory force. However, in a dialectical move, identity is also transformed into a property relatively detached from the subject: a property that the subject can literally own, buy, and sell. Chasin states: “Identity-based marketing and consumption are kissing cousins with identity politics” (102). In other words, practices of market segmentation are regarded as the main contemporary agent of the process of reification of identity under capitalism.

A recent body of work in queer theory has been addressing the question of reification by engaging with the dialectic between reification and totality as conceptualized by Hungarian Marxist György Lukács, in his *History and Class Consciousness* ([1919-1923] 1971). Two key authors turning to Lukács are Rosemarie Hennessy, in *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism* (2000) and Kevin Floyd, in *The Reification of Desire: Toward a Queer Marxism* (2009).<sup>24</sup> In different ways and to different degrees, both of them find in Lukács a conceptual apparatus well suited to sustain a contemporary reencounter between queer theory and Marxism in times of homonormativity.<sup>25</sup> While Duggan privileges an attention to the balance of forces, an emphasis on the politico-ideological practices

articulating sexual politics to the social formation in its totality, and a focus on concrete and conjunctural analysis, the queer readings of reification and totality offered by Hennessy and especially by Floyd operate at a *higher* level of abstraction. In the next section, I focus on such readings of Lukács. On the one hand, I continue my discussion of the problem of identity by exploring the place of identity politics in Hennessy's and Floyd's Marxist analyses. On the other hand, and more broadly, I ask to what extent the level of abstraction to be found in this body of work—which derives from the particular Marxist tradition it aims to recover, and partly contrasts with a Gramscian approach—either illuminates further the problem of homonormativity or limits our understanding of it.

### *Queer Readings of Reification and Totality*

In *History and Class Consciousness* ([1919-1923] 1971), Lukács famously develops Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism: the mechanism by which relations between people come to appear and to be experienced as relations between things; or, more concretely, the mechanism through which the capitalist circuit conceals the social relations necessary to the production of commodities. In his theory of reification, Lukács registers the increasing pervasiveness of the commodity-structure in modern capitalist societies organized around Taylorism. In the opening of the essay on "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," he writes: "at this stage in the history of mankind there is no problem that does not ultimately lead back to that question and there is no solution that could not be found in the solution to the riddle of commodity-*structure*" (83). Lukács especially emphasizes the grasp of the commodity-structure on consciousness. That is, he argues that the transformations of capitalism under Taylorism have not only *objective* effects on the mode of production, but also *subjective* effects. The deskilling of assembly line workers and the rationalization and specialization of production through scientific management—that is, the decoupling of labor from knowledge—fragment both the production process and the consciousness of the worker: "[the] fragmentation of the object of production necessarily entails the fragmentation of its subject. . . . Neither objectively nor in his relation to his work does man [*sic*] appear as the authentic master of the process. . . . As labour is progressively rationalised and mechanised his lack of will is reinforced by the way in which his

activity becomes less and less active and more and more *contemplative*” (89). In this passage, the reification of consciousness appears as a direct effect of an objective transformation in the mode of production.

According to Lukács, both the consciousness of the proletariat and that of the bourgeoisie are subject to this process of reification. However, only the proletariat is faced with the “historical task” of reaching a collective consciousness of its own situation, hence negating reification and moving toward a restoration of the social “totality.” In Lukács’ terms, only the proletariat can become the identical “subject-object” of history, for only the consciousness resulting from its situation corresponds *as such* to an objective apprehension of the totality of social relations: “The self-understanding of the proletariat is . . . simultaneously the objective understanding of the nature of society. When the proletariat furthers its own class-aims it simultaneously achieves the conscious realisation of the—objective—aims of society” (Lukács [1919-1923] 1971, 149).<sup>26</sup> Importantly, while the reification of consciousness (of both the proletariat and the bourgeoisie) is conceptualized by Lukács as the subjective effect of the commodity-structure, he emphasizes that the process of reification is crucially mediated by forms of knowledge. As Floyd observes, “Lukács’s argument that reification is objectively total unfolds in largely epistemological terms; it is based primarily in his discussion of the reification of knowledge. . . . These knowledges do not merely ‘reflect’ the formal abstraction of commodity; they actively mediate capital and have their own objective social effects” (Floyd 2009, 24). Both Hennessy and Floyd draw on Lukács’ argument about the reification of knowledge in order to reexamine the epistemological premises of queer theory as it developed through the 1990s and to set the stage for its contemporary reencounter with Marxism. Yet they do so in different ways.

In *Profit and Pleasure*, Hennessy argues that most of queer theory, like identity politics, reifies sexual identity by removing it from the broader terrain of material social relations from which it emerges. A particularly pertinent case in point, in her view, is Butler’s foundational work on gender performativity, in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (1993a). For Hennessy, what characterizes Butler’s theory as a form of reified knowledge is *not* a foregrounding of any simple kind of reified identity. As she registers, Butler’s intervention—and the formation of queer theory at large as a field of knowledge production—took place in the late

1980s and early 1990s as a *critical commentary* on identity: “Queer theory presented itself in the late 1980s as an emphatically post-marxist critique of sexual identity politics. . . . Queer theory distances itself from lesbian and gay identity politics because it sees any identity as internally divided and therefore not an apt or effective rallying point for change” (Hennessy 2000, 52-53). This passage is over-generalizing and does not entirely do justice to the articulations between queer theory and the complex terrain of identity politics. Yet Hennessy is right in pointing out that queer theory generally resists the reification of sexual identities by considering them to be socially produced. Furthermore, in her view, what distinguishes Butler’s approach to the social production of sexual identities from a Marxist approach to the same problem is not a lack of materialism per se, but rather the *kind* of materialism deployed by Butler (55-57). Hennessy had already formulated this argument in an earlier essay, titled “Queer Theory, Left Politics” (1994). Here, she observed that Butler adopts from Foucault a materialist frame that focuses on “[n]ormative discourses and social practices that regulate action, behavior, speech acts, and institutions” (96). These are, indeed, material sites of power and they do contribute to produce the materiality of sexual bodies, as Butler argues. But Hennessy comments: “Historical materialism understands the social as historically produced through normative practices (ideologies) and the law (state organization) *as well as* through the division of labor. That Butler, like Foucault, entirely drops labor out of her social analysis marks her claims on the material as post-marxist” (97). In other words, Hennessy contests an exclusive focus on politics and ideologies that does not articulate those levels to the level of the economic.

Thus, according to Hennessy’s analysis, what renders queer theory legible as a reified form of knowledge, rather than a reification of sexual identity as such, is first and foremost a reification of what she terms “culture-ideology.” This point is central, for Hennessy does not reiterate a queer critique of more essentializing gay and lesbian identities. Although gay and lesbian identities seem to be most immediately available to contemporary practices of market segmentation, in her view queer subjectivities do not escape the grasp of reification. She argues, on the contrary, that by operating theoretically on the cultural terrain of signification alone, queer theories of performativity function today as privileged points of support for neoliberal ideological formations: “postindustrial economies increasingly require a high-tech systems management consciousness that knows that identity, like

knowledge, is performative” (Hennessy 2000, 68). This critique works by signaling *affinities* between queer theory and neoliberal social relations. As such, it tends to remain abstract rather than engaging in an analysis of how queer theoretical practices might actually mediate the concrete politico-economic project of neoliberalism. As she writes: “My concern is that these knowledges are producing subjectivities that seem all too congruent with the forms of reified consciousness required of the new stewards of capitalism, the middle-class fraction of professional-service workers” (108). Yet, rather than assuming that queer theory *produces* subjectivity, one would have to explain how queer theory’s discourse *about* subjectivity may or may not translate in the production of neoliberal formations. The level of abstraction in Hennessy’s analysis does not make room for such explanations.

Hennessy’s critique concerns a field of knowledge that extends beyond the boundaries of queer theory and involves both post-Marxism and cultural studies. Upon noticing Butler’s appropriation of Laclau and Mouffe in her theory,<sup>27</sup> Hennessy formulates a critique of both Butler and Laclau and Mouffe that focuses on their understanding of the social. According to her, when the contingency of the social—its openness to contradictory articulations—is considered to be dependent exclusively on the structural instability of signifiers and of the process of signification itself, “the symbolic *is* the social” (Hennessy 1994, 98).<sup>28</sup> This critique in part resembles the one that Hall (1986c) directs against Laclau and Mouffe. However, Hennessy also criticizes the trajectory of cultural studies and of Hall’s work because of their “culturalism.” As Colin Sparks (1996) does in his reconstruction of the relation between Marxism and cultural studies, discussed at the beginning of the previous chapter, Hennessy seems to identify in Hall’s *critical* engagement with Marxism during the 1970s and 1980s the roots of his partial departure from it in the 1990s (Hennessy 2000, 82).<sup>29</sup> I argue, instead, that Hall’s work in the 1980s is worth recovering in the context of the contemporary “Marxist renaissance” in queer theory. As I have already begun to show, a critique of reification such as Hennessy’s, inspired by Lukács’ Marxism, tends to operate at a level of abstraction that Hall’s reading of Gramsci would help concretize.

Like Hennessy, also Floyd finds in Lukács a starting point to reflect on queer theory and its relationship with Marxism. However, he is far more explicit in pointing out that the articulation of a queer Marxism for the twenty-first century requires a revision of *both* forms of knowledge. Floyd writes: “Perhaps the most basic way of understanding the impasse between

Marxism and queer theory that persisted through the nineties, and to a lesser extent still does, is in terms of Marxism's traditional emphasis on thinking a totality of social relations. . . . Marxism's totalizing theoretical practices" (Floyd 2009, 4). As Floyd registers, one of the effects of Marxist totality thinking has been a tendency to deprioritize and subordinate questions of sexuality, that is, to relegate them to the "superstructural" domain of ideology as mere effects of reification. Thus, one of the inaugural gestures of queer theory has been to refute this particularization of sexuality, which amounts, in fact, to a universalization of heteronormativity (5). To be sure, Floyd does insist that the defining feature of Marxist totality thinking is not a general dismissal of differences, for its goal is to negate reification rather than affirm universalism: "If Marxism aspires to understand the mediations that articulate different horizons of social reality, if it tends to emphasize connection rather than differentiation, this is because a social and epistemological severing of connections is precisely one of capital's most consequential objective effects. In this respect, totality thinking is a rigorously *negative* practice" (6).<sup>30</sup> Yet his defense of a Marxist theoretical practice does not impede him to acknowledge the tensions existing between queer theory and the history of Marxism's dismissal of sexual politics.

Moreover, Floyd maintains that on the terrain of totality thinking queer theory and Marxism not only part ways, but can also reencounter each other. On the one hand, he observes that queer theory itself has often taken shape as an epistemological aspiration to totality: from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's assertion that the homosexual/heterosexual divide is central to virtually *all* aspects of Western culture in *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), to Michael Warner's deployment of queer as a mode of resistance against *all* regimes of the normal in *Fear of a Queer Planet* (1993), to Lee Edelman's positing of heteronormative reproductive futurism as the symbolic order of the social and the horizon of *all* politics in *No Future* (2004). Floyd comments: "A constantly expanding focus on the way heteronormativity is thoroughly entangled with a host of social horizons that appear at first to have nothing to do with sexuality has been a recurring feature of some of the most trenchant work in the field" (Floyd 2009, 7). On the other hand, through an interesting argumentative twist, Floyd suggests that precisely the *most* reified forms of queer knowledge may offer a privileged point of support for a contemporary reencounter between queer theory and Marxism. Butler's theory of gender performativity is again a case in point. Her work does not entail the expansive gesture mentioned above, but

rather “suggests that scrutinizing the discursive complexities of the sexual body is at least as important as the sustained examination of that body’s concrete social location” (7).<sup>31</sup> In what is perhaps the most sophisticated chapter of *The Reification of Desire*, Floyd rereads Butler’s theory of gender performativity as a theory of the transformations of gender under Taylorism in the United States. His goal is to historicize and concretize Butler’s analysis while at the same time performing the potential of a contemporary reencounter between queer theory and Marxism.

According to Floyd, the rationalization and mechanization of labor promoted by Taylorism, hence the process of deskilling of assembly line workers and the introduction of scientific management, not only affected the workers’ consciousness, as Lukács argued, but it also dissociated the *body* of the male worker from what were previously considered to be its inherent capacities. The male worker ceased to be the natural repository of particular expertise and became one interchangeable member of a standardized workforce: an element of the chain. Through an opposite and parallel process, those belonging to the emerging professional-managerial class found themselves engaging in forms of intellectual labor detached of physical activity. However, Floyd observes, this dissociation between body and knowledge taking place at the level of production, and threatening the manhood of both male workers and managers, was supplemented at the level of consumption. A niche market emerged in the early twentieth century that explicitly targeted men and offered them the possibility of rearticulating their masculinity in leisure time: fishing, hunting, sporting, and so forth. The main example considered by Floyd is that of the magazine *Esquire*:

It featured articles explicitly masculinizing skills that ranged from etiquette to cooking to home decor and gardening. It also featured the elaborate and overtly pedagogical detailing of techniques of laboring masculinity—how to hunt, how to fish—in the series of columns or “letters” Hemingway wrote for twenty-eight of the magazine’s first thirty-three issues. . . . *Esquire*’s mission, in other words, was forthrightly and instrumentally pedagogical; it elaborated the means rather than the end of masculinity, the how rather than the why, consistently articulating the performative practice of masculinity as a question of technical competence. (Floyd 2009, 98)

Floyd interprets the emergence of this new form of interpellation through Butler's theory of gender performativity, but historicizing the latter in relation to the concrete context of Taylorism. As he points out, Butler's appropriation of Althusser allows her to conceptualize gender as a form of skilled labor *without* capital: the labor of repetitive citation that is constitutive of performative gender and yet abstracted, in Butler's work, from the circuit of capital (Floyd 2009, 96).<sup>32</sup> According to Floyd, Butler's theory throws light as no one did before on the production and reproduction of gender, at the same time as it participates in its reification by abstracting the gendered laboring subject from the social relations that historically constitute it. By rereading her theory in the context of Taylorism, Floyd argues that the social conditions of possibility for the emergence of performative masculinity<sup>33</sup> are to be found in the dissociation between body and knowledge taking place at the level of production and performatively reconstituted at the level of consumption:

Men who were part of an emerging professional-managerial class found themselves engaged in sedentary rather than physical labor in a corporate office, while working-class men were, in Marx's metaphor, simultaneously being reduced to so many appendages of the scientifically managed factory. What these managers and laborers shared in common was an experience of work that seemed to threaten a loss of manhood itself. As indeed it did: a normalization of the male body in terms of manhood began to give way to something called masculinity, as corporate marketing efforts like the one that produced *Esquire* seized an opportunity. Consumption now intervened to constitute a manliness increasingly less in evidence at the moment of production. (Floyd 2009, 105)

As this reading illustrates, Floyd's project of a queer Marxist epistemology does not amount, like Hennessy's, to a reorientation of queer theory and a critique of its theoretical practice, but rather emerges from a mutually transformative encounter between queer theory and Marxism. On the one hand, Butler's reified understanding of gender is historicized and concretized, hence dialectically reoriented toward an aspiration to totality. On the other hand, Lukács' analysis of the subjective effects of reification under Taylorism (its grasp on consciousness) is integrated with a reading of the reification of masculinity in the same context.<sup>34</sup> Floyd goes further and

argues that precisely the reified epistemology deployed by Butler is what allows her to scrutinize the sexual body with unprecedented precision, thus making his own contemporary reading possible in the first place: “This scrutiny is ultimately inseparable from what . . . we might reasonably call the ‘false’ immediacy of her analysis, an analysis that forthrightly refuses to conceptualize anything resembling a social totality, which offers a powerful analysis of gender normalization instead, indeed can offer that analysis only because of that same refusal” (Floyd 2009, 117). In other words, Floyd reads the development of queer theory itself as a dialectical process. Rather than criticizing Butler for her reification of gender, as Hennessy does, he regards Butler’s gesture—and the gesture of queer theory at large—not only as a negation of Marxism’s totalizing exclusion of sexual politics, but also as having produced a necessary analysis of the specific materiality of the sexual body. As such, it constitutes, in his view, the best point of support for a contemporary reencounter between queer theory and Marxism.

Hennessy’s and Floyd’s different assessments of Butler’s work and of the field of queer theory are intimately connected to their different conceptualizations of reification itself. Hennessy is faithful to Lukács in considering reification as an ideological mechanism that mystifies social reality by means of fragmentation and particularization: the social totality—the organic totality of social relations—disappears from view in favor of a multiplication of naturalized differences informing, in turn, reified forms of consciousness, among them sexual identities (Hennessy 2000, 99, 103-106, 217). According to Hennessy, sexual identities are the product of a reification of affects and desires that accompanied the process of industrialization in the United States during the second half of the nineteenth century. This process was highly contradictory, for industrialization did not just contribute to reify such affects into sexual identities, but began to release them, in the first place, from the constrictive space of the family. It did so, as John D’Emilio has famously argued, by displacing production from the family to the factory and thus creating, for example, the conditions of possibility for the formation of urban gay (male) communities (D’Emilio 1983; Hennessy 2000, 103-105).<sup>35</sup> However, from her twenty-first-century vantage point, Hennessy points out that such reified sexual identities have become increasingly functional to the ideological channeling of what she terms “human affective potential” into contemporary identity-based practices of market segmentation. A conjunctural analysis of the concrete

articulations between the LGBTQ movement and the market, such as the one offered by Chasin, is integrated and partly replaced here, at a higher level of abstraction, with a general theory of the ideological function of identity in neoliberal capitalist social formations.

Like the proletariat for Lukács, a queer collective subject according to Hennessy must negate the process of reification that has been producing particularized sexual identities and articulate, instead, a political consciousness that dialectically aspires to the social totality: “One of the steps in forming collective agency entails ‘disidentification’. . . . This ‘work’ is a process of unlearning that opens up the identities we take for granted to the historical conditions that make them possible. . . . The disidentifying subject taps into the ways her outlawed needs, including her affective needs, are channeled by culture-ideology” (Hennessy 2000, 229). In other passages, Hennessy is more ambiguous about the nature of the process that must negate the reification of sexual identities and reorient queer politics toward the social totality. For instance, while calling for this reorientation, she does acknowledge the extent to which identities form a field of common sense on which any counter-hegemony must install itself: “How can [a radical sexual politics] accommodate the material history of identity thinking—including its hold on the public imagination in certain social formations and its lived effects on individual lives—and also bring to sexuality a global analysis that begins in another, less fettered, place?” (35). However, not only such tactical remarks are generally obscured, in *Profit and Pleasure*, by Hennessy’s emphasis on the negation of identities; but, at a more fundamental level, identities and identity politics are primarily interpreted as a mystifying effect of reification, that is, as a function of ideology: “This evaluation of identity politics as ideology invites consideration of it as one way class struggle under late capitalism is being displaced” (227).<sup>36</sup> As such, Hennessy suggests that the terrain of identity politics must be negated and displaced by a Marxist sexual politics.

The notion of ideology at work in Hennessy’s analysis is, as in Lukács, of the negative kind, for reification is conceptualized exclusively as a mechanism of mystification. Floyd, instead, rethinks the notion of reification in a way that, to a certain extent, brings his analysis closer to Hall’s reconceptualization of ideology discussed in the previous chapter. Relying on Edward W. Said’s (1983) critique of the concept, Floyd begins by registering a key limitation of reification as theorized by Lukács: its tendency toward abstraction and partial dehistoricization.<sup>37</sup> According to this critique, the dialectic between

reification and totality runs the risk of translating into an all-encompassing narrative of decline seamlessly absorbing all aspects of capitalist social formations and indifferent to concrete and conjunctural analysis. Indeed, while Lukács' conceptualization of the reification of consciousness proceeds from the observation of historically specific transformations of capitalism—first and foremost, the transformation of production under Taylorism—the notion according to which reification acquires a *total* dimension, affecting all aspects of social life, marks the concept as increasingly abstract (Floyd 2009, 17-18). Even as this expansion of the concept is to be found less in Lukács than in some of his readers, Floyd agrees with Said in asserting that “this ceaseless expansion was finally the direction intended by Lukács himself with his emphasis on the total character of the process to which the term refers” (18). Against such limitations, Floyd sets out to historicize the process of reification.

Importantly, Floyd's queer vantage point is not incidental to his attempt to historicize and even concretize reification: “Though theorizing sexuality in terms of reification may at first seem like yet another expansion of the concept beyond useful limitations, this effort in fact emphasizes reification's historically and socially specific operation” (Floyd 2009, 20). We saw this at work in Floyd's reading of Butler. In Floyd's view, that reading does not only historicize Butler's theory of gender performativity, but Lukács' theory of reification as well. It manages to explain, by means of conjunctural analysis, not only how reification produces the worker's contemplative consciousness, but also how it extends its reach to other aspects of social relations, such as gender. Rather than *assuming* the totalizing reach of reification, Floyd's reading locates Butler's theory as a point of support to help *explaining* the specific extension of reification from the domain of labor to that of gender identity. This further clarifies that, for Floyd, the articulation of a queer Marxism does not take shape just as a Marxian amendment of queer theory: “a queer critique of the reification/totality dialectic that is also a Marxian concretizing of this dialectic is my most basic objective, an objective that insists throughout on the simultaneous convergence and divergence of these open, unfinished forms of critical knowledge” (33). In other words, reading Butler through Lukács is also a way, for Floyd, of reading Lukács through Butler.

It is precisely by further historicizing and concretizing the concept of reification from a queer standpoint that Floyd departs, if implicitly, from a purely negative understanding of ideology. If reification ceases to be

conceived of as a process of increasing ideological mystification of social reality and begins to be reformulated as an historical process producing, among other effects, queer sexual identities, one has to pose the following question: “What historically subsequent chains of determination can result from the dynamic of reification, and can these be adequately understood in terms of the possible outcomes the concept of reification typically presupposes, total mystification or total negation?” (Floyd 2009, 22) In other words: if queer sexual identities are themselves the product of reification, is the only option available for a queer Marxism to help forging a collective consciousness that shall negate those identities altogether in order to articulate an aspiration to totality? Floyd addresses this question by shifting the focus from Lukács’ emphasis on the *subjective* effect of reification, that is, its grasp on the consciousness of the proletariat, to its *objective* effect: in this case, the materialization of particular sexual bodies. It is through this shift that he comes to reformulate reification as a process of mystification as well as an opening of critical spaces. His reading of the emergence of performative masculinity under Taylorism, for instance, proceeds later in the book with an analysis of the formation of an underground gay consumer culture in the 1950s and 1960s, mostly through the circulation of erotic visual material. According to Floyd, this gay consumer culture worked precisely on the “weakness” of performative masculinity (what Butler would call the precariousness of performative gender) and prepared the terrain for the emergence of a gay male community in the United States (Floyd 2009, 157-177). Floyd argues: “While reification is neither a form of liberation nor liberation’s teleologically posited, anticipatory promise, it does open certain conjunctural, historically specific conditions of possibility for liberation” (153). In this radical reconceptualization of Lukács’ concept, reification produces a terrain on which, as Hall would put it, two can play at the game.<sup>38</sup>

Floyd reaches this reconceptualization of reification not through Hall or Gramsci, but through Butler and, importantly, Foucault. In the first chapter of *The Reification of Desire*, he deploys the same reading strategy that he adopts in his reading of Butler while revisiting the first volume of Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality* ([1976] 1978).<sup>39</sup> Here, he argues that what Foucault terms the “deployment of sexuality,” inaugurated in the late nineteenth century, must be understood as an instance of reification. Especially with the emergence of psychoanalysis, Floyd argues that sexual desire is epistemologically abstracted from the whole of the subject as well as from the whole of the subject’s social relations. Rereading Foucault via

Lukács and focusing on the context of the United States, he suggests that the quick spread of psychoanalytic knowledges and practices be understood within the context of a growing service sector, an increasing differentiation between manual and intellectual labor, and an expansion of the terrain of consumption under Taylorism. At the same time, he questions Lukács' exclusive focus on the reification of knowledge. Following Foucault, he points out that key effects of this process of reification are to be observed on the body itself. This chapter is key to Floyd's project, for it is through Foucault that Floyd begins to reconceptualize reification "not in the Lukácsian terms of a relation between knowledge and consciousness but in the Foucauldian terms of a relation between knowledge and bodies" (Floyd 2009, 41). In other words, it is Foucault who provides Floyd with a point of support to shift from the subjective to the objective effects of reification, and to open up the notion beyond its purely negative inflection.

Floyd's reading of Foucault and Lukács through one another is exemplary, like his reading of Butler, of the potential of a contemporary reencounter between queer theory and Marxism. Yet that Foucault provides Floyd with a point of support to rethink reification beyond its purely negative inflection may suggest that Floyd *needs* to step out of Marxism in order to accomplish this move. As I have argued in the previous chapter, instead, Hall's reading of Gramsci in the 1980s, as well as Gramsci's own work, already offer a notion of ideology that transforms it into an open terrain of struggle, rather than just a mechanism of mystification of social relations. Moreover, Floyd's recourse to Foucault and Butler undermines the negative inflection of reification but not entirely its tendency toward abstraction. In other words, the concept alone, even in its less negative version developed by Floyd, would still impede him to intercept the workings of specific politico-ideological practices that mediate the process of reification as it materializes in concrete social formations. In fact, Floyd is aware of this problem. This is why he supplements his reading of Lukács with insights drawn from regulation theory: "Regulation theory focuses not on capital's general laws of motion [such as the dialectic between reification and totality] but on the historical and institutional specifics of accumulation in a relatively well-defined period and location" (Floyd 2009, 33). Regulation theory insists on the contingent articulations between a given "regime of accumulation" and a given "mode of regulation," where the latter refers to the ensemble of politico-ideological practices and institutions shaping a particular social formation. Moreover, regulation theory emphasizes that "any successful

harmonizing of a regime of accumulation and a mode of regulation is only ever a hegemonic process, which is to say a potentially unstable one, and in this respect the work of Gramsci is one of regulation theory's more obvious touchstones" (34).<sup>40</sup> Indeed, if Foucault and Butler help Floyd tracking the objective effects of reification on sexual bodies, and help him pushing the concept of reification beyond the boundaries of its original negative connotation, it is actually Gramsci—if mediated by regulation theory—who allows him to fully historicize and concretize the concept.<sup>41</sup>

However, by drawing on regulation theory, Floyd's attempt to supplement Lukács works only one way within the economy of the dialectic between reification and totality. That is, while regulation theory helps him track the politico-ideological practices that stabilize a given hegemonic formation and, in the process, mediate the fragmentation of social life in concrete social formations, that supplement does not explain the politico-ideological practices articulated by *counter*-hegemonic formations. Or, in other words, the supplement is able to identify the historically specific mediations of the movement from totality to reification, but it neglects the politico-ideological practices through which a given political formation may negate reification and articulate a dialectical aspiration to totality. In fact, in Floyd's analysis this second movement appears to be *unmediated*, to escape articulation.

This is most clear in the last chapter of *The Reification of Desire*, where Floyd posits a contemporary divide between homonormativity and queer critical practice as an effect, itself, of reification. Floyd emphasizes that one of the defining features of homonormativity is not just the privatization of homosexuality, as Duggan argues, but its concomitant *desexualization*: "The citizens [that civil rights lobby organizations] propose to speak for are . . . not merely equivalent citizens but equivalently desexualized citizens, and the agenda they pursue begins to look a lot like the embrace of a closet that pretends not to be" (Floyd 2009, 200). The desexualizing impulse of homonormativity is indeed central to the contemporary debate in queer theory. One of its turning points is routinely identified not only in the LGBT movement's almost unilateral investment in same-sex marriage, but first and foremost in the way the depenalization of sodomy in the United States was articulated by the Supreme Court in the 2003 *Lawrence v. Texas* case, which replaced the prohibition of *sodomy* with a right to *intimacy*. As Teemu Ruskola comments, in anchoring sex to intimacy, the Court's decision shifted the demarcation between good straight sex

and bad gay sex by projecting it *within* LGBTQ constituencies, thus disarticulating both real and potential alliances in favor of new forms of antagonism (Ruskola 2005, 242).

But the emphasis on homonormativity's desexualizing impulse has a more specific function in Floyd's argument, for it allows him to go as far as to read cultures of public sex as the *dialectical other* of homonormativity. For example, drawing on an analysis offered by Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner in "Sex in Public" (1998), Floyd discusses a zoning ordinance pushed by the Rudy Giuliani administration in New York in 1995, which attacked the sexual cultures of Times Square by forbidding the presence of adult businesses in the area. He writes: "Social policies like this zoning law only reinforce the privatization of sex already inherent in the neoliberal logic of lesbian and gay rights to property and consumption; they threaten not an identity but a world of inherently critical practices and knowledges that directly contradict identity's glossy normalization" (Floyd 2009, 203). This passage suggests that cultures of public sex (pornographic bookstores, clubs, and so forth) are *inherently* critical and *directly* contradict homonormativity. This is so because Floyd's reading of their emergence and of the attacks of which they subsequently became the target is entirely reabsorbed, at a high level of abstraction, by the dialectic between reification and totality. For Floyd, those cultures of public sex dialectically emerged within the folds of a Fordist mode of regulation and helped shaping the formation of a reified gay identity that was *once* antagonistic, but that today has lost its capacity to sustain a queer critical vantage on the social totality because of the desexualizing impulse of homonormativity. It is this dialectical movement that directly produces, according to Floyd's analysis, the contemporary antagonism between gay homonormativity and queer critical practices:

If a queer vantage on the social that emerges within a neoliberal conjuncture has . . . to be contrasted with a contemporaneous gay [read: homonormative] vantage on the social, this opposition is the product of a neoliberal desexualization of a form of identity [gay identity] that itself carried radically negative implications back when a movement out of the closet was inconceivable except in relation to a movement into the streets, when "coming out" represented a revolutionary publicizing of tabooed sexuality, when the identitarian and the socially radical seemed less persistently at odds. (Floyd 2009, 210)

Thus, even as Floyd's radical reconceptualization of the concept of reification seemed to have opened a space to think about identity politics and the social totality without dismissing the former, bringing his analysis close to Hall's understanding of ideology, in times of homonormativity he suggests the contrary. As the passage above illustrates, his analysis ultimately converges with those who identify today a necessary link between identity politics and homonormativity. Also Ruskola suggests that, to the desexualization of homosexuality articulated by the Supreme Court in *Lawrence v. Texas*, queer politics must respond with an emphasis on sexual acts rather than sexual identities, that is, with a recovery of sodomy. Yet he makes clear that this is the case exclusively for tactical reasons: "a return to a relative emphasis on acts rather than identities need not imply a metaphysical distinction between the two. Rather, an emphasis on acts can be a political tactic aimed at making certain acts available to the largest number of actors possible, rather than merely the respectable few" (Ruskola 2005, 240).<sup>42</sup> Floyd's critique of identity, instead, proceeds from his reading of identity and identity politics, in the last instance, as a moment of the dialectic between reification and totality: a historically specific concretion of sexual politics that once offered a critical standpoint but is today dialectically and directly negated, in the face of its homonormative desexualization, by "inherently resistant" cultures of public sex.

In this respect, Floyd's abandonment of Lukács' focus on the reification of knowledge, which Hennessy instead entirely preserves, proves to be enabling as much as limiting. On the one hand, it allows Floyd to reconceptualize reification as a process that mystifies social reality as much as it produces critical vantages on the social. On the other hand, it leads him to entirely by-pass the problem of the articulation of counter-hegemonic ideologies—or, in Lukács' terms, the construction of collective consciousness. I argue, in Floyd's own terms, that not only the reification of social relations, but also the process through which reification is negated in favor of an aspiration to totality must be considered as mediated by historically specific politico-ideological practices. To this end, Hall's reading of Gramsci in the 1980s is more effective than regulation theory. Lacking a theory of counter-hegemony, positing the inherently resistant character of certain sexual formations, and joining those who dismiss identity politics in order to resist homonormativity, I suggest that Floyd's analysis cannot properly theorize the *counter-hegemonic forms of identity politics* practiced within contemporary LGBTQ formations to understand

and resist the neoliberal articulation of homonormativity. As I argue in the next section, one such counter-hegemonic ideological formation is the contemporary body of work that has been termed queer of color critique. I propose that the latter is mediating the reencounter between queer theory and Marxism in times of homonormativity by struggling to hegemonize the color line within the field.<sup>43</sup>

*Queer of Color Critique  
and the Struggle to Hegemonize the Color Line*

Following Duggan, I have argued that homonormativity is not just the name for a shrinking form of single-issue identity politics, but a specific articulation of sexual politics to a multi-issue neoliberalism. According to Duggan's analysis, the emergence of homonormativity forms part of a broader shift in the ideological apparatus of the neoliberal bloc. The dialectic between reification and totality, especially in the rereading offered by Floyd and through the supplement of regulation theory, may be able to translate Duggan's conjunctural analysis at a higher level of abstraction. Yet it is less able to account for the construction of counter-hegemony. Following both Hall and Duggan, I have suggested that the terrain of identity politics is key to the emergence of a counter-hegemonic bloc, provided that identity politics is conceptualized as an expansive and intersectional field punctuated by forms of identification and disidentification. Hence, I have suggested some of the specific reasons *not* to retreat from identity politics in times of homonormativity. Among such reasons is the fact that the mobilizing of race and the practice of antiracist critique within LGBTQ formations functions today as a main point of support for understanding *and* resisting the articulation of homonormativity. I must focus now on this dynamic with more precision, emphasizing how the emergence of queer of color critique over the past twenty years has been mediating not only the debate on homonormativity within queer theory, but the very "Marxist renaissance" within the field. As Aaron Lecklinder writes, "[q]ueer of color critique, an increasingly influential and predominant strain within queer theory, has been at the vanguard of [the] return to Marxist categories and materialist analysis" (Lecklinder 2012, 184). In this section, I suggest that not only queer of color critique theoretically mediates the contemporary reencounter between

queer theory and Marxism, but also that its intervention within the field can be understood as activating processes of antagonism and recomposition. In other words, I read the theoretical field itself as a site of struggle.

The contemporary body of work that goes under the name of queer of color critique is not the first attempt to theorize the intersections of race and queerness within the field of cultural studies. The work of Kobena Mercer in *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (1994) and that of filmmaker Isaac Julien,<sup>44</sup> both close to Hall, are early instances of such an attempt. As Mercer recalls, the main goal of the Gay Black Group formed in London in 1981, in which himself participated, was “speaking out against the stereo silence created by homophobia in black communities and racism in white gay communities” (10). Similarly to contemporary queer of color critique, this early gay black critique found itself navigating a field of multiple antagonisms and drew much inspiration from the theorizing and organizing of women of color and black lesbian feminists (11). Hall offers a reading of such intersectional formations in his essay “New Ethnicities” ([1989] 1996). Here, he speaks of a shift between two different “moments” in black cultural politics in Britain. Although he considers the two moments to be interwoven, he maintains that their differences are politically salient. The first moment is portrayed in typically Gramscian terms:

Politically, this is the moment when the term “black” was coined as a way of referencing the common experience of racism . . . and came to provide the organizing category of a new politics of resistance, among groups and communities with, in fact, very different histories, traditions and ethnic identities. In this moment, politically speaking, “the black experience” . . . became “hegemonic” over other ethnic/racial identities. (Hall [1989] 1996, 442)

To this political moment corresponded, in Hall’s view, a cultural politics focused on the problem of representation. On the one hand, this cultural politics aimed at providing black subjects with access to the means and the rights of representation. On the other hand, it struggled to counter racist representations with a “positive” black imagery. Hall argues that this moment in black cultural politics cannot be deemed exhausted, at the time of his writing, in any simple way—especially given the reinvigoration of a racist imaginary under Thatcherism. Nonetheless he registers a shift: “a change from a struggle over the relations of representation to a politics

of representation itself” (Hall [1989] 1996, 444). The main ingredient of this second moment is a politics of antagonism *within* black formations. As he states, “black radical politics has frequently been stabilized around particular conceptions of black masculinity, which are only now being put into question by black women and black gay men” (447). Thus, according to his analysis, the emergence of intersectional critiques within black formations do not just redress the heteropatriarchy of those formations, but give way to a different cultural politics.

Hall reads these transformations, again, in terms of the theory and politics of hegemony. He writes: “The end of the essential black subject also entails a recognition that the central issues of race always appear historically in articulation, in a formation, with other categories and divisions” (Hall [1989] 1996, 445). And in a later essay, titled “What is this ‘Black’ in Black Popular Culture?” (1992b), he posits that these articulations are the very explanation for the connivance of certain politics of liberation with forms of oppression exercised in other domains: “The way in which a transgressive politics in one domain is constantly sutured and stabilized by reactionary or unexamined politics in another is only to be explained by this continuous cross-dislocation of one identity by another, one structure by another” (31).<sup>45</sup> This reading begins to approximate the reading I wish to provide here of contemporary queer of color critique. I argue that the latter can be understood as a counter-hegemonic ideological formation whose goal is to transform the very balance of forces within queer theory. However, Hall writes at a moment when intersectional formations tended to gravitate *away* from Marxism, or to emerge within the folds of entirely different theoretical and political languages. This is why he speaks of the terrain of identity politics as one to be seized and articulated *by* the Left. Contemporary queer of color critique, instead, mediates a reencounter between queer theory and Marxism.<sup>46</sup>

Floyd’s project is not oblivious to this mediation. In the introduction to *The Reification of Desire*, when he discusses the queer impulse of generalization to be found in authors such as Sedgwick or Warner, he also argues that this impulse “has given rise to important critiques of the gendered, racial, and indeed global blindnesses persistently risked by the abstraction ‘queer’” (Floyd 2009, 8). On the one hand, Floyd remarks that these intersectional critiques within queer theory have expanded rather than limited the field. On the other hand, he goes further and argues that, while questioning queer theory’s totality thinking, such critiques at the

same time are immanent and constitutive of that very aspiration to totality, for they are animated by a “genuinely dialectical refusal to isolate sexuality from other horizons of knowledge” (9). Thus, Floyd proposes a careful reading of these dynamics that *both* emphasizes the politics of difference and antagonism internal to the field *and* its quest for connections:

These more recent developments in queer studies can . . . be understood not in terms of a persistent rejection of generalizing impulses but in terms of a critique immanent to this generalizing impulse itself, a critical dynamic in which analytic intersection and differentiation, at the level of the field and sometimes at the level of specific interventions in the field, tend to operate in tandem. (Floyd 2009, 9)

In other words, we could say that antiracist critiques within queer theory bear both the mark of identity politics and that of the politics of hegemony. More precisely: intersectional critiques interrupt any attempt to practice a politics of hegemony or any other form of aspiration to totality that would demand an elision of difference and identity. They turn the latter, instead, into a privileged terrain from which a queer politics of hegemony can begin to be articulated. Another way of putting this is by arguing that intersectionality marks the difference between queer totality thinking and universalism. The question was posed in these terms, for instance, during a roundtable discussion published in *GLQ*'s special issue on “Queer Studies and the Crises of Capitalism” (Rosenberg and Villarejo 2012). In the context of that conversation, Floyd asks how to repose the question of totality in queer theory without reproducing the elisions and exclusions of universalism, so he answers: “grasping the ways in which capitalism’s gendered, racialized, sexualized violence is inseparable from . . . capitalism’s simultaneous identity and nonidentity with itself” (Crosby *et al.* 2012, 138). In other words, intersectionality interrupts any approach to the social formation that would reduce the latter to a seamless totality, calling attention to the articulatory practices that necessarily preside over the production of such a structured whole.

Thus, as Floyd puts it, “I take the practice of thinking totality to be a necessary critical effort to grasp a social field as unified precisely in its disunity” (Crosby *et al.* 2012, 139). However, in spite of contemporary critiques of identity politics—that Floyd himself, at least in part, reiterates in his work—the question of identity is central to that critical effort.

Answering to Floyd, Roderick A. Ferguson affirms: “The question of totality . . . begs us to consider the critique of identity *as well as* the politics of identity that has often undergirded the term *totality*” (139). How else to question the politics of identity implicitly or explicitly informing different forms of totality thinking and universalism—that is, the politics of white heteropatriarchy—if not by mobilizing counter-hegemonic identity formations, first and foremost intersectional ones?<sup>47</sup> Ferguson asserts that “[w]e can’t help but ‘do’ totality, so best we know how we’re doing it” (140). We may paraphrase him and add that, precisely in the course of a critical engagement with the question of totality, we cannot help but “do” identity, so best we know how to do it. Later in the same roundtable, Heather Love makes a similar point: “The question of totality must be routed through more sustained reflection on the distinction between the prescriptive and the descriptive. . . . To play this out in terms of the question of identity: whatever we think of identity, whether or not we believe in it or approve of it, it continues to exist, to shape our experience, to affect our life chances, and so on” (144). And, we shall add, it continues to inform our theoretical and political practices. Queer of color critique is a case in point, for it emerges as a form of intersectional critique—a counter-hegemonic form of identity politics—that compels the contemporary “Marxist renaissance” in queer theory to articulate an aspiration to totality without universalism.<sup>48</sup>

While this reading begins to grasp the central role played by queer of color critique in mediating the contemporary reencounter between queer theory and Marxism, it also tends to reduce it—and to reduce intersectionality, more broadly—to a *means* by which queer theory can better access the social in its fragmented complexity. In other words, queer of color critique would appear as an “epistemic corrective” that reveals a complex reality lying beneath non-intersectional theorizations of the social. To a certain extent, this reading is correct. Yet it is also important to resist a reading of intersectionality that would reproduce the assumption of a *transparent* relationship between theoretical practice and the social field, that is, the assumption that theory might be able to gain unmediated access to the social and provide a pure representation of it. In order to displace this assumption, and to fully appreciate the intervention of queer of color critique, I propose to interrogate its *ideological* work. As I suggest, queer of color critique mediates the contemporary critique of homonormativity and the “Marxist renaissance” in queer theory not just by “correcting” the theoretical protocols of the field, hence offering a more

precise understanding of the social formation, but also by *struggling* to hegemonize the color line in queer theory.

Examples of this dynamic are numerous. One only has to look at the special issue of *Social Text*, titled “What’s Queer About Queer Studies Now?” (Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz 2005a), in order to notice such a struggle to recompose the field. At the beginning of their introduction, David L. Eng, Judith (Jack) Halberstam, and José E. Muñoz write: “The contemporary mainstreaming of gay and lesbian identity—as a mass-mediated consumer lifestyle and embattled legal category—demands a renewed queer studies ever vigilant to the fact that sexuality is intersectional” (Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz 2005b, 1). As Ferguson himself remarks, “the editors of this special issue point to what we might consider a hegemonic struggle within queer studies” (Ferguson 2007, 111). In his own contribution to the special issue, Halberstam is explicit about the need to rearticulate the field of queer theory as a whole: “The future of queer studies, I claim, depends absolutely on moving away from white gay male identity politics and learning from the radical critiques offered by a younger generation of queer scholars who draw their intellectual inspiration from feminism and ethnic studies rather than white queer studies” (Halberstam 2005, 220). In the face of homonormativity, the goal of this special issue and of other similar interventions is not merely to carve a space for intersectional conversations within queer theory, or even to expand the field by means of intersectional analysis, but to suggest that queer theory is intersectional or is not—indeed, to redefine what is queer about queer studies now: race.<sup>49</sup>

Queer of color critique can be read as a form of counter-hegemonic identity politics to the extent that it proceeds through practices of *disidentification*. Disidentification, as a queer of color theoretico-political practice, was first conceptualized by Muñoz in his homonymous *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999).<sup>50</sup> This is not the kind of disidentification envisioned by Hennessy as a negation of reified forms of identity (Hennessy 2000, 229). As Muñoz puts it, disidentification “is about expanding and problematizing identity and identification, not abandoning any socially prescribed identity component” (Muñoz 1999, 29).<sup>51</sup> This is so because the practice of disidentification, as he conceptualizes it, maintains a particular relationship with ideology. Drawing on Michel Pêcheux’s ([1975] 1982) reading of Althusser, Muñoz argues that there are three ways of responding to the interpellative call

of ideology, that is, identifying with it (assimilation), counteridentifying and thus refusing the very terms of the hailing (utopia), or disidentifying: “Disidentification is the third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology” (Muñoz 1999, 11). Importantly, despite this passage’s insistence on dominant ideology, queer of color critique disidentifies with hegemonic as well as *counter*-hegemonic ideological formations: more specifically, it disidentifies with both queer and antiracist discourses. Upon recalling Hall’s reading of Gramsci in the 1980s, Muñoz writes: “Within Gramsci’s writing on the ideological field we come to glimpse that subordinated ideologies are often rife with contradictory impulses. . . . Gramsci lets us understand not only working-class racism, but also gay racism or homophobia within communities of color” (115). Disidentification becomes the name for an intersectional practice grounded on the theory of hegemony and articulation.

Thus, on the one hand, Muñoz points out that Duggan’s work on homonormativity is particularly relevant to his conceptualization of queer of color practices of disidentification, for the latter must be understood also as critical commentaries on “white gay male normativity and its concomitant corporate ethos” (Muñoz 1999, 112).<sup>52</sup> In times of homonormativity, queer of color critique disidentifies with both queer theory and LGBTQ political formations: it works within and against them by means of antiracist antagonism. On the other hand, this does not mean that queer of color critique can straightforwardly identify with the history of antiracist and anticolonial ideologies. Muñoz makes this point, for instance, by recalling instances of homophobia in Frantz Fanon’s foundational text *Black Skin, White Masks* ([1952] 1967). So he asks: “What process can keep an identification with Fanon, his politics, his work possible for [a queer woman revolutionary from the Antilles]? . . . Disidentification offers a Fanon, for that queer and lesbian reader, who would not be sanitized; instead, his homophobia and misogyny would be interrogated while his anticolonial discourse was engaged as a *still* valuable yet mediated identification” (Muñoz 1999, 9). Hence, it is at the crossroads of its disidentifications with both queer and antiracist ideologies that queer of color critique emerges as a counter-hegemonic ideological formation in its own right: “‘Queerness’ and ‘blackness’ need to be read as ideological discourses that contain contradictory impulses within them—some liberatory, others reactionary. . . . The lens of disidentification allows

us to discern seams and contradictions and ultimately understand the need for a war of position” (115). That a queer of color war of position primarily operates, today, within the field of queer theory—where it struggles to hegemonize the color line—should not blind us to its complex politics of positionality across a terrain of multiple antagonisms.

Muñoz’s text begins to suggest how queer of color critique mediates the contemporary “Marxist renaissance” in queer theory.<sup>53</sup> However, it is Ferguson, in *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (2004), who explicitly deploys an historical materialist analysis to frame the intervention of this emerging theoretical formation. Following Muñoz, Ferguson argues that the very relation between queer of color critique and Marxism is, in fact, a relation of disidentification: “Queer of color analysis disidentifies with historical materialism to *rethink* its categories and how they might conceal the materiality of race, gender, and sexuality. In this instance, to disidentify in no ways means to discard” (5). To this extent, Ferguson’s approach to Marxism is not dissimilar from Floyd’s. However, while Floyd’s rereading of reification and totality tends to track the materiality of sexual bodies as an objective effect of the laws of capitalism,<sup>54</sup> Ferguson emphasizes that *culture*—or ideology, following Hall’s approach to the concept—is the primary site where to retrieve that materiality; not because race, gender, and sexuality are matters of “merely cultural” concern, but because culture is a site that “compels identifications with and antagonisms to the normative ideals promoted by state and capital. . . . As it fosters both identifications and antagonisms, culture becomes a site of material struggle” (3). It is such an understanding of culture that grounds Ferguson’s disidentification with Marxism:

As the site of identification, culture becomes the terrain in which formations seemingly antagonistic to liberalism, like marxism and revolutionary nationalism, converge with liberal ideology, precisely through their identification with gender and sexual norms and ideals. Queer of color analysis must examine how culture as a site of identification produces such odd bedfellows and how it—as the location of antagonisms—fosters unimagined alliances. (Ferguson 2004, 3)

Ferguson’s analysis of industrialization in the early twentieth century illustrates how culture emerges from the contradictions between state and capital as such a site of material struggle. According to his reconstruction,

the process of industrialization in the United States was accompanied by waves of African American migration to Northern urban centers (Ferguson 2004, 39). This gave rise to the formation of the African American neighborhood as a “vice district”: “African American vice districts were socially heterogeneous zones in which blacks and whites, as well as heterosexuals and homosexuals, could congregate” (40). The concentration of a displaced racialized population in specific neighborhoods, driven by industrialization, turned such neighborhoods into sites of gendered and sexual heterogeneity. As Ferguson recalls by focusing especially on the context of Chicago, a typical instance of this heterogeneity were the black and tans, that is, “parties known for open displays of sex, for their inversion of racial hierarchies, for ‘race mixing,’ and as sites from which same-sex relationships and identities could emerge” (40). However, as industrialization produced the conditions of possibility for such racialized nonheteronormative formations to take shape, the latter also became the site for the articulation of competing ideological discourses.

On the one hand, a state discourse emerged. For instance, city governments in Chicago and elsewhere enacted laws against vice that led to increased surveillance of African American neighborhoods, including recurrent police raids of black and tans and other such instances of racial and sexual transgression (Ferguson 2004, 41). Moreover, a discourse concerning black cultural difference became central to New Deal policies. African American gender, sexual, and kinship practices—brought into view and reshaped, in fact, by industrialization and migration—came to be understood as “cultural” causes of poverty and as barriers to assimilation that welfare programs must help remove. In this way, Ferguson observes, the ideological articulation of African American cultural difference emerged from the contradictions between state and capital: “By investing culture with moral agency, New Deal ideology obscured the contradictions between the state’s enforcement of heteropatriarchal ideals and capital’s encouragement of African American nonheteronormative formations” (38). On the other hand, Ferguson tracks the ways in which New Deal ideology was sustained by the discourse of the new Chicago School of sociology, formed through the 1920s and 1930s and specializing on urban sociology. Chicago School sociologists regarded the racial heterogeneity produced by African American migration, and the consequent gendered and sexual heterogeneity to be found in African American neighborhoods, as symptoms of the social disorganization caused by industrialization. What was coded

as “vice” by state ideology was articulated as “deviance” in sociological terms. Ferguson comments: “The Chicago School’s construction of African American neighborhoods as outside heteropatriarchal normalization underwrote municipal government’s regulation of [Chicago’s] South Side, making African American neighborhoods the point at which both a will to knowledge and a will to exclude intersected” (41). In other words, state discourse and sociological discourse overlapped and sustained each other.

Finally, converging with both state ideology and Chicago School sociology on the terrain of culture was also the black cultural nationalism articulated, among others, by Richard Wright. Ferguson highlights that Wright made *direct use* of both sociological theories of social disorganization and Marxism in order to formulate his black nationalist ideology: “Wright drew upon marxism and sociology to narrate the gendered and sexual transgressions inspired by industrial capital. Borrowing from sociology, Wright’s work located African American nonheteronormative formations within the feminizing dysfunctions of capital” (Ferguson 2004, 44). So, Wright’s work reproduced the Chicago School’s normative view of African American gendered and sexual heterogeneity, yet supplemented with black nationalist investment: against the feminization brought about by industrialization, black political agency must be muscular and masculine. Ferguson writes: “While installing an antiracist practice, this version of nationalism proved aggressively heteropatriarchal. Emerging out of the context of gender and sexual fluidity and diversity, Wright’s nationalism worked to keep that fluidity and diversity at bay through heteropatriarchal regulation” (45). Thus, from a queer of color vantage point, Wright participated in the hegemonic regime of sexual regulation targeting nonheteronormative formations.

The task of queer of color critique, as formulated by Ferguson, is to retrieve those nonheteronormative formations as the ground for both theoretical and political practice. In other words, Ferguson does not reduce the preoccupations with gendered and sexual heterogeneity to be found in state, sociological, and black nationalist ideologies to mere mystifications of African American reality. Rather, he questions their heteropatriarchal regulation of that heterogeneity. As he argues, this attempt to regulate was first and foremost sustained by an ideology of *transparency*, which led those competing discourses to posit gendered and sexual heterogeneity as a direct symptom of capitalism—a pathological effect of industrialization. Against such transparent readings, queer of color critique sets out to revisit

figures and formations of racialized nonheteronormativity as sites of counter-hegemonic identification.

One such figure is to be found in Conrad Bentzen's sociological study of a black and tan (Bentzen 1938). Bentzen, a student of Chicago School sociologist Ernest Burgess, conducted in 1938 an ethnographic study of a black and tan cabaret in the South Side of Chicago, where he could observe the performance of a transgendered mulatta. Ferguson quotes him:

Every night we will find the place crowded with both races, the black and the white, both types of lovers, the homo and the hetro [*sic*]. . . . Before long the orchestra strikes up a tune and the master of ceremonies appears on the stage. This person is a huge mulatto with wide shoulders and narrow hips. . . . It is a lascivious creature that strikes the normal as extremely repulsive. With a deep husky voice it begins to sing a wild song and as the tempo increases the stage rapidly fills with a remarkable collection of sexual indeterminants. (Bentzen, quoted in Ferguson 2004, 40)

Bentzen reads the transgendered mulatta as a pathological symptom of industrialization. This reading—offered, in this case, by canonical sociology, yet virtually by state ideology and black nationalism as well—parallels Marx's own reading of the prostitute in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* ([1844] 1964), with which Ferguson opens *Aberrations in Black*. Ferguson quotes Marx: "Prostitution is only a *specific* expression of the *general* prostitution of the laborer. . . . In the approach to woman as the spoil and handmaid of communal lust is expressed the infinite degradation in which man exists for himself" (Marx, quoted in Ferguson 2004, 7-8). As state ideology, Chicago School sociology, and black nationalism converged, in the early twentieth century in the United States, in their reading of African American nonheteronormativity as a pathological effect of industrialization, Ferguson observes that bourgeois ideology and Marxism converged, in the nineteenth century, in their reading of the working class as pathologically sexual (8-9). The prostitute in Marx and the transgendered mulatta in Bentzen are figures of such pathologizing readings.<sup>55</sup> For Ferguson, as already mentioned, an ideology of transparency underlies these readings:

Taking the prostitute to be the obvious and transparent sign of capital, at what point could Marx approach the prostitute and her alleged pathologies as discursive questions, rather than as the real and objective outcomes of capitalist social relations? At what point might he then consider the prostitute and others like her to be potential sites from which to critique capital? (Ferguson 2004, 10)

As Ferguson suggests, only by disidentifying with Marxism, black nationalism, and any transparent reading of the social can queer of color critique recover figures of racialized nonheteronormativity for the articulation of queer critical standpoints on the social formation. At this point, it is important to emphasize that, in Ferguson's analysis, the nonheteronormative does not just coincide with transgressions of heterosexuality and the gender binary recognizable as such. More broadly, as his recovery of the prostitute from Marx's text suggests, the nonheteronormative names various gender, sexual, and kinship formations that do not conform to the dictates of heteropatriarchal regulation. The female-headed household, for instance, emerges throughout *Aberrations in Black* as a key figure of the nonheteronormative, troubling in equal measure the ideologies of the state, of canonical sociology, and of black nationalism. Like the "vice district" and the emergence of gendered and sexual transgressions in it, the female-headed household was read as a moral perversion of African American culture by New Dealers, who would exclude single mothers from the allocation of benefits (Ferguson 2004, 37), and as one of the feminizing effects of industrialization by Wright (46-53).<sup>56</sup>

By placing particular emphasis on the African American female-headed household as a figure of the nonheteronormative, Ferguson takes up Cathy Cohen's famous call for queer theory and politics to make space for nonnormative figures such as the "welfare queen" (C. Cohen 1997). This is no simple gesture of liberal inclusion. Rather, it is precisely in this significant expansion of the nonheteronormative that we can locate a way in which Ferguson's text, like Cohen's, participates in the contemporary struggle to hegemonize the color line in queer theory. Indeed, Ferguson affirms that "[t]he racialized eroticization of black heterosexuals and homosexuals outside the rationalized (i.e., heteronormative) household symbolically aligned black straight and gay persons" (Ferguson 2004, 87). This does not mean that the various figures of the nonheteronormative must be understood in a relation of pure equivalence, or that Ferguson abdicates

the critical task of calling into question the articulations of African American heteropatriarchy. On the contrary, we saw how a critique of heteropatriarchal black nationalism takes center stage in his project. But it is precisely *through* this critique—of black nationalist attempts to discipline African American gendered and sexual heterogeneity—that Ferguson can recover African American formations as sites of nonheteronormativity broadly understood. In this way, he can formulate a project of queer of color critique that does not just add color to queer, but invests the color line as such with queerness.

Ferguson's expansion of the nonheteronormative also sustains his key turn, in the last chapter of *Aberrations in Black*, to the history and works of women of color and black lesbian feminists, such as the Combahee River Collective, Barbara Smith, and Audre Lorde.<sup>57</sup> Amy Villarejo suggests as much: "Ultimately, Ferguson cements feminist critique with queer critique through two key descriptors of his object, naturalized 'heteropatriarchy' and its companion term, the 'nonheteronormative'" (Villarejo 2005, 72). Ferguson situates the emergence of women of color and black lesbian feminist formations in the 1970s and 1980s, yet in an ideological context resembling to a certain extent the early twentieth century, that is, at the crossroads of competing ideological discourses converging on the terrain of heteropatriarchy. First of all, Ferguson states: "These feminist formations can be located within the wake of Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1965 text, *The Negro Family: A Case for National Action* (popularly known as the Moynihan Report)" (Ferguson 2004, 111). As he recalls, the Moynihan Report was commissioned one year after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and it was meant to provide a sociological analysis of the factors preventing a full realization of racial equality. The report substantially reiterates the normative assumptions of Chicago School sociologists and early-twentieth-century New Dealers, identifying the biggest impediment to the realization of civil rights in the African American dysfunctional family. According to the report, not only the history of slavery and segregation has castrated the black man, thus removing him from his leadership place in the family, but has proceeded to replace black men with black women, giving rise to dysfunctional (read: nonheteronormative) female-headed households (119-122).

A similar reading was shared at the time by black and anticolonial revolutionary movements. Ferguson traces various articulations of revolutionary agency—through the ideologies of the Black Power movement and the Marxist-Leninist Black Panther Party (BPP) as well

as in the work of revolutionary theorists and leaders such as Fanon and Amílcar Cabral—as attempts to recover heteropatriarchal masculinity (Ferguson 2004, 112-115).<sup>58</sup> As he argues, anticolonial and black revolutionary movements were critical of civil rights, cultural nationalism, and U.S. nationalism, yet largely converged with all of them on the terrain of heteropatriarchy. Women of color and black lesbian feminist formations emerged in the United States out of this ideological context, and in a relation of antagonism with a predominantly white feminist movement: “Rendered invisible by the political subjects of hegemonic feminism, minority nationalism, and marxism, women of color feminists attempted to articulate identity formations that would work to negate the nationalist presumptions and protocols of identity” (126). Or, in my own terms, they articulated a counter-hegemonic intersectional identity politics.

While Ferguson emphasizes black feminism’s disidentification with black revolutionary movements in the 1970s and 1980s—and *Aberrations in Black* is predominantly framed as an intervention in American studies—in times of homonormativity queer of color critique conducts a key struggle within the field of queer theory and LGBTQ formations.<sup>59</sup> *Aberrations in Black* does not explicitly address the problem of homonormativity.<sup>60</sup> Yet Martin F. Manalansan IV takes up Ferguson’s reading strategy in “Race, Violence, and Neoliberal Spatial Politics in the Global City” (2005), in order to analyze, by means of ethnography, the combined effects of homonormativity and neoliberal gentrification processes on contemporary queer of color formations in New York. Manalansan’s analysis focuses on the transformations affecting the neighborhood of Jackson Heights and Christopher Street. For example, through the narratives of his informants, he observes how the racially diverse neighborhood of Jackson Heights—where “gay bars and other queer spaces coexist with the multiethnic enclave economies that inhabit the same geographic location” (45)—mutated in the aftermath of 9/11. On the one hand, increasing police surveillance both undermined the presence of communities of color in public space and provoked the dispersal of practices of public sex that used to characterize the neighborhood (45-47). On the other hand, this coincided with the emergence of a portrayal of Jackson Heights, in the mainstream gay press, as a new “gay mecca.” For example, Manalansan quotes an article appeared in *NEXT*, a weekly gay guide to New York: “Might there be something that Manhattan snobs (like myself) are missing out on in those other boroughs? . . . To find out, a few friends and I got Metrocards,

brushed up on our Spanish, prepared ourselves for the unknown, and ventured out to Jackson Heights, a racially diverse neighborhood in Queens which hosts a thriving gay scene and sublime Mexican food” (*NEXT*, quoted in Manalansan 2005, 47). For the middle-class gay man from Manhattan, Jackson Heights appears as a space of both sexual and ethnic consumption. According to Manalansan, the narrative of loss offered by his queer of color informants and the narrative of gay consumer excitement articulated by *NEXT* are not just two contradictory narratives about the same neighborhood, but “mutually constitutive elements of a neoliberal portrayal of Jackson Heights” (Manalansan 2005, 49).<sup>61</sup> As this analysis shows, homonormativity in the twenty-first century materializes as yet another ideological formation that participates in the disciplining of nonheteronormative racial difference.

It is through Manalansan’s essay that race makes its only incursion in Floyd’s analysis, during his discussion of homonormativity in the last chapter of *The Reification of Desire*.<sup>62</sup> The way in which this incursion takes place is worth examining. According to Floyd, Manalansan’s reading of the spatial politics affecting Jackson Heights and Christopher Street can be understood as an “update” on Berlant and Warner’s (1998) earlier analysis of the neoliberal attack on public sexual cultures in New York, such as the zoning law with which the Giuliani administration helped dispersing the sexual culture of Times Square (Floyd 2009, 205). In Floyd’s view, Manalansan’s reading reveals the specific operations of neoliberal homonormativity at the time of the “war on terror.”<sup>63</sup> Drawing on David Harvey, he argues that homonormativity after 9/11 must be understood within a context of raising authoritarianism: “David Harvey remarks of this simultaneously neoliberal and militarized conjuncture that ‘the U.S. has given up on hegemony through consent and resorts more and more to domination through coercion’” (207).<sup>64</sup> According to this reading, the racial operations of homonormativity tracked by Manalansan via ethnography appear as one instance among others of coercive state power—a state that has given up on the construction of hegemony through consent.

Although there is some truth in this reading, two problems emerge. First, recalling Hall’s conceptualization of Thatcherism as a form of authoritarian populism (Hall [1980] 1988) we may ask: what is homonormativity if not the product of politico-ideological practices that work to construct *consent* to authoritarian neoliberalism? This is precisely *why* homonormativity has emerged as a central problem transforming and recomposing the

contemporary field of queer theory. While the neoliberal bloc is navigating an evident crisis of legitimacy, the problem of homonormativity points at the fact that broad segments of LGBTQ formations seem to be the least interested in taking part in the construction of a counter-hegemony. I suggest that a privileging of coercion over consent does not describe the relation between homonormativity and neoliberalism as such. Rather, it depends on Manalansan's choice to center, in his analysis, the segments of the LGBTQ community that are most directly affected by the contemporary operations of state and market forces, thus emphasizing the authoritarian effects of neoliberalization. Floyd, however, appropriates Manalansan's analysis (through Harvey) as a transparent rendering of the articulated operations of homonormativity and neoliberalism: as a theory of the relation between the two. This leads us to a second problem with his appropriation. Queer of color critique makes this incursion in *The Reification of Desire* in order to specify the *objective* effects of neoliberalization in its current phase. We may speculate on the extent to which this appropriation of queer of color critique as a transparent optic is facilitated by the ethnographic nature of Manalansan's essay. Certainly, Floyd's redeployment of Manalansan's analysis tends to obscure the fact that, as any counter-ideological formation, queer of color critique does install itself on a "real" ground but it also "reads" that ground.

Ferguson himself seems to suggest this point in an essay titled "To Be Fluent in Each Other's Narratives: Surplus Populations and Queer of Color Activism" (2010). The essay addresses the relations between queer of color intellectual labor, queer of color activism, and communities of color. Here, Ferguson signals the limits of Gramsci's theorization of the "organic intellectual." In his view, "Gramsci unfortunately promoted a fiction of immediacy that has helped to shape understandings of radical intellectuals' and activists' relationships with marginalized communities—a theory in which the intellectual is the reflection of the down-trodden and the compromised—*as if*" (157). Yet rather than dismissing the concept of the organic intellectual, Ferguson turns to its particular rearticulation in Hall's work and, more broadly, in the work carried out at the CCCS at the time of Thatcherism. He writes: "The need for progressive interventions was evident, but so was the obligation to put aside fictions that the historic conditions and the potential interventions of progressive actors would be transparent and wholly intelligible" (158).<sup>65</sup> The same spirit must guide our understanding of the contemporary intervention of queer of color critique. Certainly the latter mediates today our understanding of homonormativity

and the “Marxist renaissance” in queer theory because racial antagonisms are central both to the operations of homonormativity and to the broader historical conjuncture. However, we gain less by apprehending this intersectional intervention just as a transparent rendering of the present conjuncture than by appreciating the ideological work it performs within the field of queer theory: the *struggle* it conducts to hegemonize the color line. At stake is a more general understanding of the specific social location of theoretical practice and intellectual labor. I continue to address these questions in the next section by recovering the political life narrative of Gloria Wekker, an Afro-Dutch lesbian feminist who has been navigating feminist, antiracist, and LGBTQ formations as well as institutional spaces, especially within the university, from the 1970s to the present.

*Harming the Institution:  
The Political Life Narrative of Gloria Wekker*

On February 13, 2015, students and staff members of the University of Amsterdam occupied the Bungehuis, where the Faculty of Humanities is located, to oppose a plan of severe budget cuts. The occupation ended with the eviction of the protesters by the police. Thus, on February 25, student organizations and unions organized a demonstration to protest how the university administration had dealt with the first occupation. The demonstration morphed into a new occupation, now of the Maagdenhuis, the main administrative building of the University of Amsterdam. As soon as the protests crystallized into a discussion about the democratization of the university, a University of Color (UoC) collective formed in order to affirm that there can be no democratization without decolonization. The story of UoC parallels that of similar political formations elsewhere, most notably the emergence of the South African student movement Rhodes Must Fall within the folds of the movement for a free education, Fees Must Fall.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, like Rhodes Must Fall as well as Black Lives Matter, if operating on a smaller scale, UoC is primarily organized around the problem of the color line and the decolonization of knowledge but is explicitly intersectional in content and composition.<sup>67</sup> Working together with other collectives already present at the University of Amsterdam, UoC was at the forefront of the process that led to the establishment of a Diversity Commission in charge of transforming the structure of the university and

its curricula.<sup>68</sup> Afro-Dutch lesbian feminist and anthropologist Gloria Wekker was asked to chair the Commission, and she accepted.

I conclude this chapter by recovering Wekker's political life narrative, in order to pose two different sets of questions.<sup>69</sup> On the one hand, how have contemporary antiracist formations come to be led by women and queers of color? I have been arguing so far that queer of color critique mediates today the debate on homonormativity and the reencounter between queer theory and Marxism by struggling to hegemonize the color line within the field. Has this struggle been paralleled by a hegemonization of gender and sexuality within the political space of antiracism? Has antiracist organizing become a privileged site for the articulation of a queer intersectional standpoint, or even a queer Marxism? I address these questions through Wekker's story, hence focusing on the specificities of the Dutch context. On the other hand, tracing not only Wekker's passages through feminist, antiracist, and LGBTQ formations, but also her seizing of institutional spaces, I ask how intellectual labor performed within the university relates to these transformations in the political field.

Wekker has been a central figure in the development of feminist and queer of color theory and politics in Europe. She was born in 1950 in Paramaribo, Suriname, and moved with her parents and siblings to the Netherlands in 1951. As she recalls during an interview I conducted with her, her family was one of the first Surinamese families to arrive in the Netherlands, before the wave of migration that took place in the wake of Suriname's independence in 1975. While studying law at the Radboud University of Nijmegen in the late 1960s—after a travel to the United States as a high school student, which had brought her into contact with black liberation—Wekker found herself involved in the Dutch anticolonial movement, mostly composed of students from Suriname and the Antilles. She recalls:

this is 1969, and they were also into texts of Huey Newton . . . all those Black Panthers writing in the United States, and translating their work. . . . So, for a lot of black women, our trajectory was . . . first, anticolonial movement with men who were dominant and who were, you know, really getting women to make the coffee and do the minutes of the meeting; and then we moved on to the white women's movement; and from there we split off into our own antiracist, strongly lesbian movement.

In Wekker's memory, at least two events mark the emergence of racial antagonisms within the Dutch white feminist movement: first, a confrontation that took place at the Winter University of Women's Studies held in Nijmegen in 1983, where black feminists protested their marginalization in the program;<sup>70</sup> second, the publication in 1982 of an article by Philomena Essed, titled "Racisme and feminisme" (Racism and Feminism) (1982), in the Dutch *Socialisties feministiese teksten* (Socialist Feminist Journal). Thus, it was in 1984 when Wekker, together with Tania Leon, Tineke Sumter, and José Maas, formed Sister Outsider, a black lesbian feminist literary collective. As Wekker recalls, by the time the group was formed traces of the earlier anticolonial movement had vanished and men had not organized into a broad antiracist movement.<sup>71</sup> It was women of color—especially lesbian women—who gave rise and came to lead antiracist organizing in the Netherlands in the 1980s.<sup>72</sup>

In a comparative analysis of queer of color mobilization in the Netherlands and the United States, Nicholas Boston and Jan Willem Duyvendak offer very different portraits of the two contexts (Boston and Duyvendak 2015). Boston traces a lively trajectory in the United States, from the black lesbian feminism of the 1970s and 1980s, through queer of color visibility within the LGBTQ movement in the 1980s, to the shifts in the very definition of queer of color identity in the context of an expanding multiculturalism in the 1990s and 2000s (138-141). According to Duyvendak's reconstruction, instead, race and sexuality began to intersect in the Netherlands in significant ways only in the early 2000s, when white Dutch gay politician Pim Fortuyn appeared on the political scene combining a commitment to sexual freedom and gay rights, a support for neoliberal deregulation, and an attack on immigration and Islam. Fortuyn, who was murdered by an environmental activist only nine days before the general election of 2002, constructed his political platform by drawing on the history of Dutch progressive sexual movements and by capitalizing, at the same time, on the terrorist attacks of 9/11. His 2002 electoral campaign was centered around the argument that the struggles conducted in the Netherlands in the 1960s and 1970s to secularize the social fabric and to affirm sexual freedom were now being invalidated by new migrant communities of Muslim background, constructed as the bearers of a heteropatriarchal cultural difference.<sup>73</sup> In Duyvendak's view, it is only in this context that sexual politics came to be articulated to race and homosexuality itself entered the Dutch public debate again, after it had been depoliticized throughout the 1990s (142).

This analysis proceeds from a specific understanding of the relations of force between the Dutch LGBT movement and the state. Duyvendak has been developing this analysis for several years. According to his reading, the close cooperation between the state and the movement has historically prevented the latter from radicalizing in ways comparable to other national contexts, such as France or the United States. In his comparative essay with Boston about queer of color mobilization, he focuses especially on the matter of civil rights legislation. Elsewhere, he argues that central to the relation between the LGBT movement and the Dutch state has been their exceptional cooperation in the context of the AIDS crisis. As he observes in “The Depoliticization of the Dutch Gay Identity” (1996), gay men in the Netherlands were even put in the position of *actively determining* governmental policies concerning AIDS, especially during the early years of the epidemic. Hence, “homosexuals did not have to take the streets in the Netherlands—after all, the campaign against the epidemic was in their hands” (424). And in “Sexual Politics, Orientalism and Multicultural Citizenship in the Netherlands” (2010), Paul Mepschen, Duyvendak, and Evelien Tonkens argue that such a depoliticization of Dutch gay identity helped preparing the ground, retrospectively, for its successful articulation within the nationalist and racist ideological discourse put forward by Pim Fortuyn in the early 2000s.

Duyvendak’s analysis is valuable, for it situates sexual politics in relation to the Dutch corporatist approach to politics (or “polder model”), hence specifying the balance of forces that has presided over the exceptional traction gained by homonormativity in the Netherlands. However, especially in the context of a discussion about queer of color mobilization, that analysis risks morphing into a narrative of white gay exceptionalism. In her own discussion of the depoliticization of the Dutch LGBT movement, Wekker partly agrees with Duyvendak, yet she suggests that the articulation between the movement and the state in the context of the AIDS crisis must be read also through the operations of the color line:

white gay men, in collaboration with the Dutch state, were able to carve out some significant institutional niches in the struggle against HIV/AIDS, which still exist to this day (Duyvendak 1996). . . . A division of labor often takes place in the AIDS organizational field in which people of color are the objects of care, not independent knowers, and white people are the subjects of knowledge, the experts, even when

the target populations are people of color. However, such questions hardly ever surface in the gay movement. (Wekker 2016, 116-117)<sup>74</sup>

In order to affirm that race was irrelevant to Dutch sexual politics until the appearance of Fortuyn on the political scene in the early 2000s, Duyvendak needs to avoid mentioning Sister Outsider as well as Suho, an earlier group of Surinamese gays and lesbians based in Amsterdam.<sup>75</sup> Wekker, on the contrary, argues that the facility with which major segments of the Dutch LGBTQ movement came to identify with Fortuyn, and more recently even supported the far-right Party for Freedom (PVV) led by Geert Wilders,<sup>76</sup> must be understood in light of the “invisible” color line running through the history of the movement. Her reading of the figure of Fortuyn avoids fetishizing the turning point of 9/11 and is preceded, instead, by an analysis of the racial antagonisms within the Dutch LGBTQ movement throughout the 1980s and 1990s, including the presence of queer of color formations (Wekker 2016, 111-120). In her view, the specific relation between the movement and the state diagnosed by Duyvendak has not just prepared the terrain for the appearance of race in the 2000s, but rather has been mediated by the problem of the color line since its inception. Duyvendak’s failure to read this mediation leads him to circumvent the existence of Dutch queer of color formations in the 1980s precisely in a piece devoted to queer of color mobilization.

To be sure, Duyvendak’s omission of the specific experience of Sister Outsider may be due to the fact that the group did not operate, strictly speaking, within the space of the LGBTQ movement.<sup>77</sup> However, such an omission contrasts with the reconstruction of queer of color mobilization in the United States offered by Boston in the same essay. Boston’s account does begin precisely with black lesbian feminism (Boston and Duyvendak 2015, 138). Interestingly, integrating black lesbian feminist organizing within the genealogy of queer of color mobilization in the Netherlands—in particular the story of Sister Outsider—would reveal not just more similarities between the Netherlands and the United States, but a history of encounter and cross-fertilization. This history was crucially mediated by the figure of Audre Lorde. It is well known that Lorde spent a significant amount of time in Berlin from 1984 to 1992, and that she was instrumental to the emergence of an Afro-German movement.<sup>78</sup> Perhaps less known is the fact that, during those years, Lorde also visited the Netherlands, invited by Sister Outsider. Wekker recalls her first encounter with Lorde’s writing:

Once I had a meeting in Rotterdam while I was working for the Ministry, and I went to the women's bookstore in Rotterdam. I was looking at books and there I saw this beautiful purple color book with a lot of clouds on it and the cover, the cover of a book is so important. . . . Anyway, the cover of the book really spoke to me, so I started reading the back cover and this was the book of a black lesbian writing about her life: *Zami*, it was *Zami*.<sup>79</sup>

Wekker remembers the identifications that *Zami* made possible for her—from the memory of growing up as a black child to the experiences of dating white women as a black lesbian.<sup>80</sup> Not long after her encounter with *Zami*, Sister Outsider was formed, named after the famous collection of Lorde's writings published the same year (Lorde 1984). When Wekker heard that Lorde would come to teach at the Free University in Berlin in the summer of 1984, she wrote to her publisher, Kitchen Table Press in New York, and invited her to Amsterdam. Lorde visited Amsterdam twice, in 1984 and 1986.

In *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (2011), Fatima El-Tayeb offers a reading of Lorde's impact on the Afro-German movement. It is the pivotal role played by Lorde that made it possible for that movement to take shape from its inception around the standpoint of queer black women. For example, *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out* ([1986] 1991), a volume edited by Afro-German activists Katharina Oguntoye and May Opitz also thanks to the intervention of Lorde,<sup>81</sup> is considered to be the foundational text for the Afro-German movement as a whole. El-Tayeb insists on the difference that it made for the movement to take root through the work of queer black women: "because of the central role of *Showing Our Colors*, the life stories of women stood for the emerging community of Afro-Germans as a whole, thus radically changing the usual pattern in which the male experience is presented as normative. . . . This differentiated black Germans from almost any other ethnic, diasporic, or nationalist movement in which typically women, as well as queers, while taking part in the struggle additionally have to fight for their inclusion in a communal We" (El-Tayeb 2011, 67). Moreover, the reach of this inaugural queer feminist standpoint extended well beyond the group of women who worked with Lorde in Berlin and who participated in the project of *Showing Our Colors*. As El-Tayeb points out, the Initiative Schwarze Deutsche (Initiative Black Germans)

(ISD), which resulted from the first national meeting of black Germans in 1985, articulated a feminist and transnational discourse from the start; and ADEFRA, a network of Afro-German women founded in 1986, added a strong lesbian presence to black German organizing (70-71). Even today, if conflicts over sexuality emerge within the movement, El-Tayeb remarks that “[d]ue to their well-known central role, lesbian and feminist activists cannot easily be marginalized as irrelevant or dangerous to a black German movement that was decisively shaped by them” (72). While the history of a movement does not *determine* its shape, it certainly contributes to articulate the balance of forces within it.

A similar trajectory defines the emergence of antiracist organizing in the Netherlands, which indeed maintained strong links with the German movement, especially through Sister Outsider. Wekker remarks that a substantial difference between the German and the Dutch context—a difference that was dear to Lorde herself—consisted of the fact that black lesbian feminists had begun organizing in the Netherlands *before* their encounter with Lorde (Ellerbe-Dueck and Wekker 2015, 67). Nonetheless, the two contexts remain similar in many respects. As *Showing Our Colors* was the foundational text for the Afro-German movement, the text that inaugurated the debate on race and racism in the Netherlands was *Everyday Racism: Reports from Women of Two Cultures* ([1984] 1990), by Philomena Essed.<sup>82</sup> Like its German counterpart, if different in shape, Essed’s pioneer analysis of the everyday practices and effects of racism in the Dutch context was articulated through the experiences of black women. These historical trajectories can begin to explain, as far as the Dutch and the German contexts are concerned, why women and queers (especially queer women) often can be found at the forefront of antiracist political formations today. As El-Tayeb’s analysis suggests, the hegemonization of a queer feminist standpoint forms integral part, in these specific contexts, of the very emergence of black antiracist organizing.

However, such an explanation would remain incomplete—and excessively circumscribed to the Dutch and German contexts—if it failed to include an account of the seizing of institutional space, especially in the university. Wekker was never scared of the institution. Already in the 1980s, alongside her black lesbian feminist organizing, she took active part in defining Dutch antiracist policy both at the local and the national levels. In 1981, she began to work for the Dutch Ministry of Well-Being, Health, and Culture in The Hague, as representative of the ministry in the field of

ethnic minority policy in the province of South Holland, and took part in the conversations that led to the first *Policy Paper for Ethnic Minorities* published in 1983. In 1987, in the function of Policy Associate at the Amsterdam Office for the Coordination of Ethnic Minorities' Affairs, she wrote the *Anti-Racism Policy Paper* of the city.<sup>83</sup> But policy making was not to become the terrain of Wekker's main interventions. In 1987, she left the Netherlands to start her PhD research on Afro-Surinamese women's sexual culture at the University of California, Los Angeles.<sup>84</sup>

Wekker returned to the Netherlands after she obtained her PhD in 1992.<sup>85</sup> Her research, which translated years later in the publication of *The Politics of Passion: Women's Sexual Culture in the Afro-Surinamese Diaspora* (2006), investigated the *mati work* among Afro-Surinamese working-class women: a practice of same-sex relationships, sustained by specific institutions, that Wekker interpreted as based on West African principles.<sup>86</sup> In 1994, Wekker began to work at the Department of Women's Studies at Utrecht University, the Netherlands, and in 2001 she was assigned a chair on Gender and Ethnicity at the Faculty of the Humanities of the same university. Her work at Utrecht University throughout the 1990s and the 2000s was key to the introduction of intersectionality in Dutch academic and public debates.<sup>87</sup> Next to her struggle within the university—more specifically within the field of gender studies—to articulate an Afro-Dutch lesbian feminist standpoint and to affirm the centrality of intersectionality, Wekker never lost touch with black antiracist organizing. For example, she became a key public figure in the national debate over *Zwarte Piet* (Black Pete), a Dutch blackface caricature that has been contested by the black Dutch population since the late 1960s but has become the center of new antiracist struggles since 2011.<sup>88</sup> Now that she is retired, both her intellectual and political work over the past twenty years has converged in the recent publication of *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (2016), a collection of essays that aims to dissect the “cultural archive” informing—intersectionally—the construction of the white Dutch self.<sup>89</sup>

In *White Innocence*, Wekker also looks retrospectively at her work at Utrecht University (Wekker 2016, 70-79). Comparing the vicissitudes of intersectionality in the different institutional spaces that she navigated through the years—governmental policy making, the academy at large, and the specific field of gender studies—she comments: “Whereas the government and the academy at large could afford to overlook and dismiss the cogency of intersectionality, that was not possible for gender studies,

which, after the largely unresolved battles around the status of race in the discipline in the 1970s and 1980s, had to find a way to come to terms with race/ethnicity and other axes, not as an afterthought but as a central ingredient of its mission” (51-52). However, contrary to what this initial observation may suggest, Wekker is by no means optimistic about the impact of intersectionality on gender studies in the Netherlands. Instead of rearticulating the premises of the field—as it was intended to do—she suggests that intersectionality helped defusing the feminist antiracist critique that had been developed in the 1970s and 1980s: “In fact, I am arguing that the introduction of intersectionality came at an opportune moment not to continue, much less resolve, the debates about race in the feminist movement” (71). Rather, those debates have been interrupted and displaced through the assimilation of intersectionality. This happened, in Wekker’s view, to the extent that intersectionality was incorporated into the field as an optional device: “depending on context, it was optional which axes one had to engage with seriously” (71). Thus, she notices that race would routinely disappear from the analysis.

On the one hand, Wekker’s account emphasizes a central argument of this chapter: intersectional critique past and present takes shape not as a liberal call for inclusion, but rather as a hegemonic struggle. Her analysis seems to register, with regret, that the struggle was lost at her own department at Utrecht University. In so doing, on the other hand, this analysis makes little room for the ambiguities that any war of position entails. We may integrate her critique of the institution with an emphasis on the ambiguities entailed, in fact, by any attempt to seize institutional spaces. While the introduction of intersectionality into the disciplinary field of gender studies may have defused the struggle over race that had been unfolding within the feminist movement throughout the 1970s and 1980s, I suggest that the work carried out by Wekker and others in the institutional space of the university—both in Europe and the United States—has kept an intersectional antiracist theorizing alive even through moments of decreased political mobilization, helping rearticulate new struggles in the present both inside and outside the institution.

Thus, let me conclude by returning to the emergence of the UoC collective during the protests against neoliberalization at the University of Amsterdam. As I mentioned in the opening of this section, Wekker was asked to chair the Diversity Commission that was established at that university in the wake of the protests and to whose establishment UoC centrally

contributed. Of her encounter with the collective, Wekker says: “I’m always so surprised, when I’m with people from the University of Color, that they know *everything* about intersectionality, you know, it’s so nice, such a nice surprise always.” In fact, far from being a surprise, this is also the result of the intellectual labor of Wekker and other queer of color critics like her, who found in the academic institution *both* a terrain of struggle as well as a space where to keep critical knowledge production alive. This dynamic—this war of position—can help understand the hegemonization of feminist and queer standpoints in contemporary antiracist organizing. History, such as the history of the German and Dutch black movements recalled earlier, cannot be invoked alone as an unmediated explanation for the specific configurations of contemporary struggles. Rather, that history has articulated fields of possibilities, including the possibility of seizing institutional spaces for the production of counter-hegemonic ideological knowledges. Such knowledges, in turn, may have not immediately transformed the institution itself, but have been mediating the articulation of new terrains of struggle both inside and outside the institutional space.

One has to know *how* to seize that space. When I ask Wekker how does she feel about chairing the Diversity Commission at the University of Amsterdam—which looked to me, at first glance, as an attempt of the university to disarticulate the antagonism of the student movement, including the radical critique of the UoC collective—she makes clear that two conditions were key to convince her: on the one hand, the central board of the university has now a binding responsibility to implement the changes proposed by the Commission after its one year of work;<sup>90</sup> on the other hand, importantly, the student collectives are far from dissolved, but preside over the operations of the Commission and keep it to its mandate. She concludes: “You have to organize dissent around you. But you *have* to get into the institution; otherwise it’s harmless. You know, you need to *harm* the institution.” Harming the institution, or at least trying to do so, is what Wekker has been doing all along. Of course, this is only part of what is to be done, but a very important part nonetheless.

CHAPTER THREE

QUEER DIASPORIC CRITIQUES OF  
HOMONATIONALISM AND  
SEXUAL IMPERIALISM

If certain forms of queer and progressive organizing remain tied to forms of nationalist and imperial domination, how can queers of color both here and across the globe disrupt the neat folding in of queerness into narratives of modernity, patriotism, and nationalism?

Jasbir K. Puar and Amit S. Rai, “Monster, Terrorist, Fag”

The debate on homonormativity discussed in the previous chapter has expanded in specific directions at the crossroads with the “transnational turn” in queer studies (see Povinelli and Chauncey 1999; Cruz-Malavé and Manalansan 2002). In this context, the nationalist and imperialist ramifications of homonormativity have come to constitute a primary terrain of analysis. Two interventions have been pivotal in orienting this analysis. First, in *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007), Jasbir K. Puar draws in part on Duggan’s critique of homonormativity in order to diagnose the emergence of a *national* homonormativity, which she terms “homonationalism.” According to Puar’s analysis, in the context of the “war on terror” unleashed on a global scale in the aftermath of 9/11, segments of LGBTQ formations in Europe and the United States have taken part in the rearticulation of a virulent nationalism against Arab and Muslim populations. Second, in *Desiring Arabs* (2007), Joseph A. Massad tracks the operations of what he calls the “Gay International,” an ensemble

of international LGBTQ organizations and intellectuals committed to the saving of Arab gays, lesbians, and homosexuals. Massad argues that even as the Gay International advocates sexual freedom, it must be held responsible for the production of homophobia in Arab social formations. In his view, this sexual imperialism is not accidental, but rather organic to the broader edifice of Western imperialism in the Arab world.

In this chapter, I discuss these critiques of homonationalism and sexual imperialism. In order to do so, I locate Puar's and Massad's respective analyses on the terrain of queer diasporic critique. Queer diasporic critique is a contemporary theoretical formation that joins queer of color critique in its intersectional intervention within the field of queer theory. The two formations in fact significantly overlap, yet queer diasporic critique places a distinct emphasis on the transnational scale and on the sexual politics of nationalism and imperialism (Gopinath 2005b). To be sure, neither Puar's analysis of homonationalism nor Massad's analysis of sexual imperialism represent quintessential examples of queer diasporic critique. Even if their works have substantially contributed to the contemporary recomposition of queer theory around the problem of the color line, both of them depart, if in different ways and to different extents, from the theoretical practices and even the political commitments characterizing queer of color and queer diasporic critique. Additionally, Massad is an intellectual historian whose work is not even located, strictly speaking, within the field of queer theory. Thus, I position both Massad and Puar on the terrain of queer diasporic critique first and foremost to register the ambiguities that such a positioning produces.

In particular, even as Puar and especially Massad distance themselves from the field of queer diaspora, some of the most cogent critiques of their work have focused precisely on their diasporic location in the United States. This critique suggests that, *if not acknowledged*, the diasporic standpoint prevents rather than facilitate an articulation between different political struggles across the transnational divide (see Castro Varela and Dhawan 2011; Ritchie 2014). In other words, some critics ask: to what extent are Puar's and Massad's analyses of homonationalism and sexual imperialism able to articulate the struggles against heteropatriarchy and imperialism taking place in the global South? To this question, I add: to what extent are their respective analyses able (if willing) to articulate such struggles to the struggles conducted by queer of color and queer diasporic formations in the global North? As Rahul Rao puts it in the context of a different discussion,

“what if the liminal space is a dangerous one—from the point of view of producing progressive scholarship—threatening *both* the loss of Third World positionality as a result of immersion in the protocols of First World Knowledge, *and* the acquisition of First World imperial baggage by the migrant scholar of colour?” (Rao 2012)<sup>1</sup> These are some of the questions that guide my discussion of homonationalism and sexual imperialism in this chapter. Thus, central in the chapter is the problem of queer diasporic theoretical practice.

In the first section, I offer some notes on the emergence of queer diasporic critique as a theoretical formation. More specifically, I discuss the differences and overlaps between queer diasporic and queer of color critique. In the next section, I track the emergence of the concept of homonationalism from Puar’s earlier essays to *Terrorist Assemblages*. While doing so, I also show the extent to which Puar progressively departs from the theoretical practices that characterize the broader field of queer diasporic critique. Then, in the third section, I turn to Massad’s work on sexual imperialism in the Arab world. Upon discussing his analysis and some of the critiques it received, I highlight points of divergence and convergence between Puar and Massad. I suggest that, despite their different approaches, they in fact converge on the terrain of theoretical practice: both of them tend to deploy theoretical abstractions that appropriate political struggles without fully preserving their concrete determinations. In the fourth section, I further develop this point by turning to key theoretical sources of Puar’s and Massad’s respective analyses. Here, I briefly go back to debates on theoretical practice that took place in the 1980s and involved Michel Foucault, Edward W. Said, and Hall.

Hence, in the fifth section, I illustrate an alternative approach to the problems of homonationalism and sexual imperialism. By looking in particular at Rahul Rao’s analyses of the emergence of homophobia in contemporary Uganda (Rao 2014; 2015), I suggest that a queer critique of homonationalism and sexual imperialism must attend to the complex articulations of local and transnational struggles for hegemony. Finally, the chapter ends by shifting the attention from the global South to the European South. The last section focuses on the current war on “gender ideology,” a conservative campaign that is taking place in Europe and especially in its Eastern and Southern peripheries. On the one hand, by looking at Europe, I aim to undo the divide between Western sexual freedom and Third World homophobia that structures the politics and

ideologies of homonationalism and sexual imperialism. On the other hand, I emphasize the antagonisms activated among queer critics themselves on *how* to understand the conservative attack. In so doing, I conclude my reflections on theoretical practice.

### *Notes on Queer Diasporic Critique*

In *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures* (2005a), Gayatri Gopinath observes that conservative ideologies of diaspora genealogically tie diasporic formations to “their” homelands through nationalism. Both diasporic and state nationalisms, in turn, tend to be articulated through heteropatriarchy, for heteropatriarchy secures the nation-state as a site of purity to which one must return or that one must reproduce as loyally as possible in the diaspora. In this way, diasporic and state nationalist ideologies collude, even if the diaspora as such often appears in state nationalist ideology as a sign of impurity. In other words, the relation between the two is contradictory. As Gopinath puts it, “while the diaspora within nationalist discourse is often positioned as the abjected and disavowed Other to the nation, the nation also simultaneously recruits the diaspora into its absolutist logic” (7). Such a recruitment is not just symbolic, but very material: “The policies of the Hindu nationalist government in India in the mid- to late 1990s to court overseas ‘NRI’ (non-resident Indian) capital is but one example of how diaspora and nation can function together in the interests of corporate capital and globalization” (7). But the accumulation of capital is not the only interest that allows state and diasporic nationalisms to converge. Heteropatriarchy is, according to Gopinath’s analysis, one of the key terrains for the articulation of that convergence.

Therefore, the key analytic gesture of queer diasporic critique closely resembles that of queer of color critique. As I argued in the previous chapter, in *Aberrations in Black* (2004) Ferguson identifies heteropatriarchy as the terrain on which otherwise divergent and antagonistic ideologies (such as Marxism, black revolutionary nationalism, and liberalism) converge, producing culture as a terrain of struggle for feminist and queer of color formations. In her discussion of Ferguson’s work, Gopinath points out that queer diasporic critique deploys a similar approach, “identifying and unraveling those peculiar alliances, the ‘odd bedfellows,’ that emerge

in the global restructuring of capital and its attendant gender and sexual hierarchies” (Gopinath 2005b, 159). Additionally, parallel to queer of color critique but with greater emphasis on the transnational scale, queer diasporic critique highlights not only the heteropatriarchal articulations of diasporic-nationalist formations, but also the nationalist and imperialist articulations of hegemonic LGBTQ formations in Europe and the United States:

If “diaspora” needs “queerness” in order to rescue it from its genealogical implications, “queerness” also needs “diaspora” in order to make it more supple in relation to questions of race, colonialism, migration, and globalization. . . . A queer diasporic formation works in contradistinction to the globalization of “gay” identity that replicates a colonial narrative of development and progress that judges all “other” sexual cultures, communities, and practices against a model of Euro-American sexual identity. (Gopinath 2005a, 11)

Thus, on the one hand, queer of color and queer diasporic critique work in concert: “Together queer of color and queer diasporic critique reveal the gendered and sexualized dimensions of imperial projects both domestically (in relation to U.S. communities of color) and internationally” (Gopinath 2005b, 160). On the other hand, as this passage suggests, what distinguishes queer diasporic critique is its emphasis on the transnational scale. Indeed, its emergence coincides with a broader “transnational turn” in queer theory, pioneered by the work of lesbian feminists of color such as M. Jacqui Alexander (1994) and Gloria Wekker (1992) in the early 1990s and fully manifesting itself, at the turn of the century, in publications such as *GLQ*’s special issue on “Thinking Sexuality Transnationally” (Povinelli and Chauncey 1999) or the collective volumes *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism* (Cruz-Malavé and Manalansan 2002) and *Queer Migrations: Sexuality, U.S. Citizenship, and Border Crossing* (Luibhéid and Cantú 2005).<sup>2</sup>

At this point, it is worth stressing that queer of color and queer diasporic critique are not simply two analogous yet discrete formations, as these preliminary observations may suggest. Gopinath herself highlights that the differences between the two are rather a matter of emphasis and that the parallels she identifies do not signal a relation of pure analogy as much as a number of significant overlaps. With specific reference to the transnational optic that distinguishes queer diasporic critique from queer of color critique,

she states: “I do not mean to suggest here that queer of color critique and queer diasporic critique exist in a binary relation to each other, where the former is narrow, local, and national, as opposed to the latter’s apparent cosmopolitanism and expansiveness” (Gopinath 2005b, 159). Indeed, on the one hand, Ferguson frames queer of color critique as a *postnationalist* intervention into the field of American Studies (Ferguson 2004, 138-148).<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, many queer diasporic analyses produced in the United States do not altogether decenter this specific national context. Rather, they highlight the emergence of transnational diasporic formations within and across its borders. A case in point is Chandan Reddy’s *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the US State* (2011).<sup>4</sup> Here, Reddy deploys the queer of color theoretical practice elaborated by Ferguson and extends its reach beyond African American formations. He does so to foreground queer of color *immigrant* formations as privileged sites of critique of the racialized borders of the nation-state in times of globalization.

In particular, Reddy discusses the figure of the “gay Pakistani immigrant” petitioning for asylum in the United States, taking as his starting point the narrative testimony of Saeed Rahman, a Pakistani immigrant living in New York City and a member of the South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association (SALGA). Rahman successfully claimed asylum in 1997 as a member of a persecuted social group (Reddy 2011, 150).<sup>5</sup> Reddy situates Rahman’s story within a field of national and transnational relations of force that help producing the figure of the gay Pakistani asylum seeker in the first place. First of all, following Gayatri C. Spivak (1996), he points out that any discussion of political asylum today must include an understanding of the different impact of the neoliberal undermining of state and civil society in the global North and the global South: “A general contrast can be made: in the North, welfare structures long in place are being dismantled. The diasporic underclass is often the worst victim. In the South, welfare structures cannot emerge as a result of the priorities of the transnational agencies. . . . Political asylum, at first sight so different from economic migration, finally finds it much easier to re-code capitalism as democracy” (Spivak, quoted in Reddy 2011, 152). According to this analysis, the failures of postcolonial and decolonizing states vis-à-vis their citizenry must not be disarticulated from the impact of neoliberalism on politico-economic structures in the South, only to ideologically rearticulate the nation-state in the global North as a site of democratic accountability—for instance, toward asylum seekers.

This observation gains further salience, in Reddy's discussion of the gay Pakistani asylum seeker, when combined with an analysis of immigration management in the United States. As Reddy points out, "although immigrants are attracted to places like New York City by the number of entry-level jobs in the service, industrial, and informal sectors of the economy, the federal government continues to recruit such workers through the language and networks of family reunification" (Reddy 2011, 159). Emphasizing this contradiction, Reddy observes that the Immigration Act (1990), with its mandate that petitioning families provide for the welfare of newcomers and combined with the general dismantling of welfare set in motion by the Clinton administration, "has exposed queer immigrants of color in particular to remarkable hetero-patriarchal coercion and has produced the disproportionate enforcement of hetero-patriarchal relations within immigrant of color communities" (161). Indeed, referencing a report by the Audre Lorde Project on queer immigrants of color in the United States, Reddy highlights that many queer immigrants "spoke about the impossibility of being gay in a context in which their dependence on family—broadly defined—is essential to living as an immigrant in New York" (160).<sup>6</sup>

Thus, Spivak is right to criticize a recoding of capitalism as democracy through political asylum or any other seemingly non-economic practice of migration management. The United States, according to Reddy's analysis, recruits and produces a racialized and gendered labor force *through* family reunification. Such a labor force forms the "diasporic underclass" that, as Spivak remarks, is often the worst victim of the dismantling of welfare in the global North—and the queer diasporic underclass even more so, its social location being mediated by the combination of both state and diasporic heteropatriarchy. Through this reading, Reddy argues that the gay Pakistani immigrant extends the genealogy of queer of color figures offered by Ferguson in *Aberrations in Black*, such as the transgendered mulatta and the female-headed African American household. Thus, Reddy projects Ferguson's analysis in the contemporary conjuncture, in which "industrial capitalism is reconstituted by transnationality" (Reddy 2011, 163). His queer diasporic critique refuses to articulate the United States as a site of freedom and democracy, or to recode capitalism as democracy. More specifically, it refuses to read "the emergence of the gay Pakistani immigrant within the legal text as a victory for gay visibility in the archive" (163). On the contrary, "it reads [that figure] as formed in the contradiction between heteronormative social relations mandated for immigrants of color

by the state's policies and the liberal state's ideology of universal sexual freedom as a mask for growing these social relations" (163-164). In other words, Reddy locates the discourse of U.S. sexual freedom on an ideological terrain emerging from the contradictions between state and capital.<sup>7</sup>

Like Ferguson, Reddy emphasizes how the contradictions between state and capital—that is, the articulations between the economic, the political, and the ideological—produce the social location of queer diasporic formations. Other critics, instead, privilege an analysis of queer diasporic identity and consciousness. For instance, in *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora* (2003), Martin F. Manalansan IV addresses the question of queer diaspora through the lived experiences of Filipino gay men in the United States—from their negotiations of different grammars of sexual identity to the strategies they deploy in order to navigate both white and multicultural sexual spaces in New York City. By means of ethnography, Manalansan highlights some of the key social contradictions that concern queer diasporic critique at large. However, he does so by placing a distinctive emphasis on the *subjective* articulations of such contradictions. As he writes, “this book confronts and queries globalization and diaspora . . . through the lives and words of Filipino gay men living in New York City” (viii). This does not mean that Manalansan entirely evades the field of objective relations of force within which the processes of identity formation unfold. As Eithne Luibhéid observes with reference to Manalansan's work, “while queer Filipino migrants may be searching for freedom from oppression, their oppression has been significantly shaped by the legacies of U.S. colonization and by ongoing economic and political relationships between the United States and the Philippines” (Luibhéid 2005, xxv-xxvi). This acknowledgment allows Manalansan to explore the formation of diasporic identity and consciousness of gay Filipino men in the United States without rearticulating “a teleological narrative of the movement from tradition to modernity, and from discomfort to settlement into gay and lesbian life” (Manalansan 2003, 5). Luibhéid continues:

Under these circumstances, queer Filipinos' migration emerges not simply as a search for freedom in the United States, but also as a search for alternatives to circumstances in the Philippines in which the United States is centrally (though not solely) implicated. Consequently, queer Filipino immigration cannot be read as a comfortable reiteration of dominant U.S. nationalist myths. (Luibhéid 2005, xxvi)

This reading of the queer Filipino diasporic subject echoes Reddy's discussion of the gay Pakistani asylum seeker. Taken together, these different analyses show that queer diasporic critique—at the level of its overall intervention as a theoretical formation—attends *both* to the objective *and* the subjective articulations of queer diaspora, its material conditions as well as its forms of consciousness. On the one hand, in so doing, it takes part with queer of color critique in the contemporary reencounter between queer theory and Marxism, which I discussed in the previous chapter. On the other hand, it also participates in a reorientation of the analysis of diaspora within the broader field of cultural studies.

The question of diaspora was brought within the orbit of cultural studies by such pioneering analyses as Hall's, in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" (1990) and Gilroy's, in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993). Gopinath explicitly draws on this genealogy, which "embraces diaspora as a concept for its potential to foreground notions of impurity and inauthenticity that resoundingly reject the ethnic and religious absolutism at the center of nationalist projects" (Gopinath 2005a, 7). Yet, with particular reference to Gilroy, she notes that this work on diaspora in cultural studies has sometimes tended toward an abstraction of diasporic formations from the field of material relations within which they take shape. Instead, in her view, "we [must] be attentive to the ways in which diasporic cultural forms are produced in and through transnational capitalist processes" (9). This is true not only of diasporic cultural production, but also of diasporic social formations and forms of consciousness. As Spivak remarks, "transnationality is becoming the name of the increased migrancy of labor. To substitute this name for the change from multinational capital in the economic restructuring of the (developed/developing) globe—to re-code a change in the determination of capital as a cultural change—is a scary symptom of Cultural Studies, especially Feminist Cultural Studies" (Spivak 1996, 245). Both queer of color and queer diasporic critique, at their best, resist such a recoding.<sup>8</sup>

Writing in 2005, Gopinath mentions that queer diasporic critique "is a particularly urgent and necessary project in the context of the Indian diaspora, given the centrality of the diaspora in the material and ideological maintenance of Hindu nationalism in India, and in light of the unholy alliance between the Hindu Right in India and the current Bush regime in the United States" (Gopinath 2005b, 159). On the one hand, through this remark, she highlights some of the characteristic features of queer diasporic critique

discussed so far: the transnational nature of its terrain of intervention as well as its emergence as an antagonistic formation vis-à-vis the convergence between state and diasporic nationalisms. On the other hand, she also situates her analysis of South Asian queer diasporic formations within the context of the “war on terror.” The latter is not a central aspect of Gopinath’s own work, but her passing reference to it is not accidental. Indeed, it is in the wake of 9/11 and against the background of the “war on terror” that queer diasporic critique has been taking shape during the past fifteen years, especially in the United States. In this context, one of its key interventions has been a critique of the nationalist and imperialist ramifications of homonormativity. Two analyses have been pivotal in orienting this critique: Jasbir K. Puar’s work on homonationalism in *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007) and Joseph A. Massad’s work on sexual imperialism in *Desiring Arabs* (2007). The rest of this chapter is devoted to a discussion of Puar’s and Massad’s respective interventions, with particular emphasis on the theoretical practices they deploy as well as the debates that their analyses provoked both in the theoretical and the political field.

### *Homonationalism: Assembling a Concept*

Perhaps no other concept of recent coinage has been able to reorient contemporary debates in queer theory and LGBTQ politics as much as the concept of homonationalism. While *Terrorist Assemblages* marks the entrance of the concept in the field of queer theory and the beginning of its viral circulations, a number of previous interventions by Puar, as it is usually the case, prepared the ground for the arguments put forward in the book. In order to understand the impact of the concept of homonationalism, it is worth tracking the trajectory of its emergence and the shifts that the concept underwent through the past fifteen years. Indeed, I suggest that in these conceptual shifts we can locate some of the specific mechanisms through which homonationalism has come to hegemonize, to a certain extent, the field of contemporary queer debates.

The starting point for Puar’s reflections on homonationalism is an earlier essay she published with Amit S. Rai, titled “Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots” (2002). The essay poses a rather straightforward question: “How are gender and

sexuality central to the current ‘war on terrorism’?” (117) Puar and Rai’s answer, however, is far from straightforward. Their central argument is that the figure of the terrorist emerges in the aftermath of 9/11 as a “monstrous” figure. This links it, in their view, to the history of Western taxonomies of sexual monstrosity and perversity. In order to make this argument, Puar and Rai first turn to Foucault’s work on the historical formation of the “abnormals” (Foucault [1975] 1997).<sup>9</sup> Foucault distinguishes between the “monster” and the “individual to be corrected” as articulatory figures respectively of sovereign power and disciplinary power: while the earlier figure of the monster essentially pertains to the domain of the Law, the formation of the individual to be corrected “is contemporaneous with the putting into place of disciplinary techniques during the seventeenth and eighteenth century, in the army, the schools, the workshops, then, a little later, in families themselves” (52). Puar and Rai draw on Foucault but suggest that, in the specific context of the “war on terror,” “we find the two figures [of the monster and the individual to be corrected] . . . in some ways converging in the discourse of the terrorist-monster” (Puar and Rai 2002, 121). For instance, they observe that within the academic field of terrorism studies—which has been developing in the United States, since the late 1960s, in close relation to the shifting imperatives of foreign policy—the terrorist is not just portrayed as a figure to be quarantined. Rather, a significant body of psychological work within the field approaches the terrorist “psyche” as an effect of “inconsistent mothering,” “sexual frustration,” or “failed heterosexuality” (122-124). Through this heteropatriarchal focus on a deviant psyche, the terrorist emerges as “both a monster to be quarantined and an individual to be corrected” (121).<sup>10</sup>

Puar and Rai’s analysis is meant to expose the ways in which the monstrous figure of the terrorist—proliferating in state, academic, and popular discourses in the United States in the aftermath of 9/11—serves first and foremost a disciplining of different U.S. formations into heteropatriarchal nationalism:

Posters that appeared in midtown Manhattan only days after the attacks show a turbaned caricature of bin Laden being anally penetrated by the Empire State Building. . . . Or think of the Web site where, with a series of weapons at your disposal, you can torture Osama bin Laden to death, the last torture being sodomy. . . . What these representations show, we believe, is that queerness as sexual

deviancy is tied to the monstrous figure of the terrorist as a way to otherize and quarantine subjects classified as “terrorists,” but also to normalize and discipline a population through these very monstrous figures. (Puar and Rai 2002, 126)

These popular representations of the “terrorist-monster-fag,” supplementing the previous recourse to Foucault’s historical analysis, allow Puar and Rai to fully unearth the contemporary articulation of the terrorist as a figure of sexual perversity. That is, monstrosity is not just a free-floating signifier that connects the contemporary terrorist with sodomites, hermaphrodites, onanists, and other historical predecessors by way of analogy. Or, in other words, the terrorist is not just *as monstrous as* those figures populating the Western archive of sexual perversity. Rather, as Puar and Rai show, the monstrosity of the terrorist is explicitly articulated *as* sexual perversity, or queerness. This anticipates one of the central arguments of *Terrorist Assemblages*, that is, a displacement of LGBTQ formations as the privileged referent of queer critique. The hegemonic struggle around the color line in queer theory reaches one of its peaks here, for Puar is only partially interested in the concrete intersections between sexual and racial formations. Rather, at a higher level of abstraction, her goal is to reframe queerness itself as an articulatory mechanism of racialization.

But, as I already mentioned, the passage quoted above also illustrates the ideological work performed by the figure of the terrorist, disciplining different U.S. formations, according to Puar and Rai, into heteropatriarchal nationalism. This ideological work is first and foremost contradictory. The emblematic figure of bin Laden is threatened with sodomization and emasculation—a typical homophobic threat—at the same time as *his* “culture” is marked as exceptionally homophobic and patriarchal. The contradictory nature of this articulation consists of absorbing elements of feminist and queer discourses in order to supplement and consolidate, in fact, forms of heteropatriarchal nationalism. In Puar and Rai’s view, the terrorist-monster-fag primarily serves to discipline the U.S. population into heteronormative patriots, *including* segments of feminist and LGBTQ formations. This process, in turn, disarticulates struggles against heteropatriarchy from struggles against nationalism, racism, and imperialism.<sup>11</sup> For example, Puar and Rai recall: “When a U.S. Navy bomb aboard the U.S.S. Enterprise [in the context of the invasion of Afghanistan] had scrawled upon it ‘Hijack This Fags,’ national gay and lesbian rights

organizers objected to the homophobia of this kind of nationalist rhetoric, but not to the broader racist war itself” (Puar and Rai 2002, 127).

Framing Puar and Rai’s discussion is the explicit assumption of a queer diasporic standpoint. On the one hand, they remark that the articulation of the terrorist as fag not only works as a process of racialization of all those recognizable (or “misrecognized”) as Muslims, but also “incites violence against queers and specifically queers of color. And indeed, there have been reports from community-based organizations throughout New York City that violent incidents against queers of color have increased” (Puar and Rai 2002, 126). On the other hand, the essay ends with an analysis of diasporic Sikh organizing in the context of the “war on terror.” Puar and Rai point out that Sikh American men wearing turbans have deployed specific practices of self-discipline in order to avoid becoming the target of racist attacks, their turban being “mistaken” for that of Osama bin Laden: “Many Sikhs . . . have simply abandoned their turbans. . . . Others have contributed to the current fervor of American patriotic/multicultural exceptionalism by donning red, white, and blue turbans” (137). Yet these are not the only consequences of the “turban profiling” targeting Sikh men in the aftermath of 9/11. In a typical queer diasporic critical gesture, Puar and Rai are equally suspicious of these self-disciplining displays of Sikh multicultural patriotism *and* of the reactivation of forms of cultural nationalism as a response to racialization:

The turban is a complicated and ambivalent signifier of both racial and religious community as well as of the power of masculine heteronormativity. . . . As such, we are as troubled by the increasing forms of turban profiling and its consequences as we are about the reemergence of cultural nationalism in Sikh and South Asian communities, which often obscures issues of gender and sexuality. (Puar and Rai 2002, 137)<sup>12</sup>

Thus, as this essay argued for the first time, preparing the ground for *Terrorist Assemblages*, the figure of the terrorist in the aftermath of 9/11 must be of central concern to queer theory. That figure works as the articulatory center of a contradictory discourse that racializes Arabs, Muslims, and other populations of color as heteropatriarchal and sexually perverse while consolidating, at the same time, forms of heteropatriarchal nationalism for heterogeneous formations in the United States; it absorbs

segments of feminist, queer, and diasporic formations at the same time as it renders queers of color, located at the intersections of such formations, the targets of increased violence. The contradictory nature of this politico-ideological process must be stressed: “on the one hand, the United States is being depicted as feminist and gay-safe by . . . comparison with Afghanistan, and on the other hand, the U.S. state, having experienced a castration and penetration of its capitalist masculinity, offers up narratives of emasculation as appropriate punishment for bin Laden, brown-skinned folks, and men in turbans” (Puar and Rai 2002, 126).

Puar and Rai do not conceptualize this process as an ideological formation. Rather, evoking Foucault, they describe it as a discourse deployed in order to “discipline” the population. However, I suggest that the contradictory nature of the process is better explained through a theory of hegemony and ideology, which foregrounds the ways in which a hegemonic bloc is able to “center” itself by absorbing segments of subordinate social groups. As I argued in the first chapter, following Anne Marie Smith’s (1994) analysis of the political struggles around Section 28, a Foucauldian analytics of power helps supplementing a Gramscian conceptualization of hegemony. Especially in times of identity politics, the former highlights the processes of self-discipline activated *within* heterogeneous social forces in the course of hegemonic struggle. In the wake of 9/11, potentially antagonistic social forces such as feminist, LGBTQ, and diasporic formations are not simply recruited into the consolidation of heteropatriarchal nationalism. Rather, as Puar and Rai’s own analysis shows, such formations are fractured and contribute unevenly and contradictorily to that consolidation. While these contradictions can be understood as the result of self-disciplining mechanisms activated within such formations, these mechanisms are an effect, in turn, of a partial articulation of feminist and LGBTQ interests to the hegemonic bloc at this particular historical juncture. It is this articulation of heterogeneous interests that allows that bloc to “center” itself and thus further consolidate its own hegemony. To put it differently, by articulating the interests of segments of feminist and LGBTQ formations (and by redefining these very interests in the process) the hegemonic bloc could temporarily secure a broader base of consent to racial profiling and anti-intellectual censorship in the United States as well as to the invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003.<sup>13</sup>

In 2004, a number of pictures began circulating which exposed the tortures perpetrated by U.S. military officers on Iraqi prisoners at the Abu

Ghraib prison in Iraq—including rape, cross-dressing, public nudity, and masturbation, as well as the mimicking of sexual acts associated with homosexuality and sadomasochism. Puar analyzes the scandal in an essay titled “Abu Ghraib: Arguing against Exceptionalism” (2004). Here, she extends some of the reflections put forward in the earlier essay with Rai, and takes a step further toward her conceptualization of homonationalism. Puar pays particular attention to the reactions that the pictures provoked in the United States. A critical analysis of such reactions is indeed relevant, and not just as a form of more or less polemical cultural politics. The Abu Ghraib scandal potentially represented a key turning point in the U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Even as anti-war sentiments had been already accumulating for some time, reaching their peak in the worldwide protests against the invasion of Iraq on February 15, 2003, the circulation of the pictures in 2004 threatened to erode, at the level of popular common sense and beyond the terrain of organized political protest, what was left of the consent to the U.S. wars among European and especially U.S. publics. However, Puar’s analysis suggests that, even as virtually all reactions to the pictures displayed sympathy with the tortured prisoners and denounced the actions of the military officers involved, most of them nonetheless reproduced the very logic behind the tortures themselves: U.S. (sexual) exceptionalism.

This is far from surprising in the case of the official state response. The Bush administration and the military establishment attempted to portray the Abu Ghraib tortures as “exceptional” and not reflective of “the nature of the American people,” in Bush’s own words (Bush, quoted in Puar 2004, 523).<sup>14</sup> But the core of Puar’s argument is to illustrate how this state response found echoes among liberal, feminist, LGBTQ, and even queer diasporic formations. As she points out, liberal commentators complained that the moral authority of the United States—indeed, its hegemony—had been jeopardized by the circulation of the pictures,<sup>15</sup> some feminists regarded the specific involvement of female officer Lynndie England in the scandal as a loss of hope for the difference that women could have allegedly made in the military,<sup>16</sup> and the gay press predominantly focused on the homophobia running rampant within the military. All such reactions are primarily concerned with “the nature of the American people,” rather than with the Iraqi prisoners themselves. About the reaction of the gay press, for instance, Puar comments: “To foreground homophobia over other vectors of shame is to miss that these photos are not merely representative of the homophobia of the military; they are also racist, misogynist, and imperialist” (Puar 2004, 529).

At the same time, Puar stresses that when the victims of the tortures were granted attention, it was done in the language of “cultural difference”:

cultural difference . . . has been used by both conservatives and progressives to comment upon the particularly intense shame with which homosexual and feminizing acts are experienced by Muslims (and for this, there is vast sympathy for the prisoners from the general public). The taboo of homosexuality (as feminized masculinity?) within Islamic culture figures heavily in the explanations as to why the torture has been so devastating to its victims. This interpretation of sexual norms in the “Middle East”—repressed, but with perversity bubbling just underneath the surface—is part of centuries-long Orientalist traditions, an Orientalist phantasmatic that certainly informed the photographs of the torture at Abu Ghraib. (Puar 2004, 524)

Thus, it reappears, in the particular context of the Abu Ghraib scandal, the figure of the “terrorist-monster-fag,” now more explicitly extended to an entire population. Arab and Muslim sexuality (not just the terrorist’s) is repressed and perverse, sexual perversity being deployed as an articulatory mechanism of Orientalization and racialization. Puar’s reference to a link between Orientalist knowledge and the tortures in Abu Ghraib is very concrete. As journalist Seymour Hersh reported, “[o]ne book that was frequently cited [among pro-war Washington conservatives in the months before the invasion of Iraq] was *The Arab Mind*, a study of Arab culture and psychology, first published in 1973, by Raphael Patai. . . . The book includes a twenty-five-page chapter on Arabs and sex, depicting sex as a taboo vested with shame and repression” (Hersh, quoted in Puar 2004, 524). The book, which was mentioned by Edward W. Said himself in his foundational work *Orientalism* (1978a) as one contemporary instance of Orientalist knowledge, helped articulating the very logic behind the tortures: break down the prisoners by breaking their “cultural codes.”<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, Puar argues that liberal, feminist, and LGBTQ commentators who sympathized with the Iraqi prisoners, and who insisted on the exceptional violence of the tortures on the grounds that they violated Muslim or Arab “culture,” reiterated the logic informing the tortures in the first place. These included queer diasporic commentators: “Faisal Alam, founder and director of the international Muslim lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, questioning (LGBTIQ) organization, Al-Fatiha, states that ‘Sexual

humiliation is perhaps the worst form of torture for any Muslim. . . . Forcing men to masturbate in front of each other and to mock same-sex acts or homosexual sex, is perverse and sadistic, in the eyes of many Muslims” (Puar 2004, 526).<sup>18</sup> Such comments, in Puar’s view, also contributed to consolidate the contradictory articulation of elements of feminist and LGBTQ discourse to U.S. heteropatriarchal nationalism: “Given the unbridled homophobia demonstrated by the U.S. guards, it is indeed ironic, yet predictable, that the United States nonetheless emerges as more tolerant of homosexuality (and less tainted by misogyny and fundamentalism) than the repressed, modest, nudity-shy ‘Middle East’” (Puar 2004, 527).

The name for that contradictory articulation is, indeed, homonationalism. Puar coins the concept in an essay published two years later, titled “Mapping US Homonormativities” (2006). She writes: “What I aim to demonstrate in this article is that . . . the war on terror has rehabilitated some—clearly not all or most—lesbians, gays, and queers to US national citizenship within a spatial-temporal domain I am invoking as ‘homo-nationalism,’ short for ‘homonormative nationalism’” (68). Thus, Puar coins the concept of homonationalism by drawing on her earlier analyses of the sexual politics of the “war on terror” as well as on Duggan’s conceptualization of homonormativity, discussed in the previous chapter. Puar’s reference to the concept of homonormativity is meant to stress here, more explicitly than in her previous interventions, that LGBTQ formations themselves have *actively* contributed to the emergence of homonationalism. As she argues, “the Orientalist invocation of the ‘terrorist’ is one discursive tactic that disaggregates US national gays and queers from racial and sexual ‘others,’ foregrounding a collusion between homosexuality and American nationalism that is generated both by national rhetorics of patriotic inclusion and by gay and queer subjects themselves: homo-nationalism” (68).

Thus, homonationalism is not just the name for a state ideology, unless we expand our understanding of the state through the Gramscian notion of integral state.<sup>19</sup> As I argued in the first chapter, following Hall, the notion of integral state encompasses both political society (the state traditionally understood) and civil society. According to Hall, the notion posits a relation of distinction *and* articulation between state and civil society, and such a relation must be always kept at the center of the analysis if the rise of popular consent to forms of state authoritarianism is to be traced in its concrete manifestations. Yet, anticipating *Terrorist Assemblages*, there is

no notion of such a relation in Puar's essay. Rather, what she registers is the entrance of LGBTQ formations into a network of power understood, along Foucauldian lines, as operating beyond or above any concrete distinction between state and civil society. More specifically, this essay identifies a seamless chain of connections among three different sites of emergence of homonationalism: knowledge production about terrorism, practices of LGBTQ consumerism (especially gay tourism), and representations of sexual and racial difference in the cartoon *South Park*. Puar rightfully argues that the heterogeneity of these sites exposes "the radical contingency of any nationalist homosexual formation, and the potency of their potential consolidation" (Puar 2006, 69). However, in order to fully grasp both the contingency of homonationalism and the mechanisms of its consolidation, it is important to track not just its diverse sites of articulation, but also the relations of force involved in the specific practices of articulation. Only an analysis of such relations of force can expose the mechanisms of potential consolidation, *or interruption*, of such a contingent and contradictory politico-ideological formation as homonationalism.

Let me insist on this point from a slightly different angle, that is, the disappearance of the problem of consent from Puar's analysis. About her reading of *South Park*, she writes: "I am interested in *South Park* not because of the size or location of its audience nor because of its potential or perceived cultural impact. Rather what intrigues me is the reflection of and continuities with critiques of the war on terror and the pathologization of terrorist bodies that is surfacing in popular culture" (Puar 2006, 79). We may contrast this approach to popular culture with the approach characterizing the field of cultural studies, especially in its early phase. Hall ([1980] 2005b), for example, famously proposed that the four moments of production, circulation, consumption, and reproduction of cultural products be understood as distinct moments that nonetheless work in articulation to one another, that is, within a regime of relative autonomy. His primary goal was to insist on the ideological work performed by popular culture while circumventing reductionist notions of false consciousness.<sup>20</sup> Puar, instead, regards popular culture as one point of support among others of a less differentiated and admittedly more abstract network of power—a reading that depends on the appropriation and circulation of Foucault within the field of contemporary cultural studies. This explains her indifference to the consumption of *South Park* by concrete audiences and her privileging of a focus on the cartoon's reproduction of broader discursive tendencies.

In fact, even as I have been reconstructing Puar's analysis, so far, on the terrain of politico-ideological critique, this is not the terrain on which her analysis primarily operates. Her discussions of multiple cultural archives have opened up a space of politico-ideological struggle that has been radically redefining queer theory and LGBTQ politics through the past fifteen years. However, her primary theoretical goal is to identify the *internal logic* of homonationalism—its regularity in dispersion, as Foucault himself put it in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* ([1969] 1972)<sup>21</sup>—rather than tracking the concrete politico-ideological practices through which that formation has been able to articulate a contradictory field of social forces.<sup>22</sup> In so doing, Puar's analysis departs not only from the theoretical practice of the early cultural studies, but also, implicitly, from Duggan's own work on homonormativity. As I argued in the previous chapter, Duggan locates the problem of homonormativity within a broader analysis of the struggles for hegemony conducted by the neoliberal bloc in the United States from the 1970s to the present. Puar, instead, draws on Duggan's intervention yet redefines homonormativity as an instance of disciplinary power: "the US nation not only allows for homosexual bodies, but also actually disciplines and normalizes them—suggesting, in fact, the need to attend to theorizations of the nation as not only heteronormative, but also homonormative" (Puar 2006, 72). While a disciplining of LGBTQ bodies and formations certainly contributes to the emergence of homonormativity, first and foremost by harnessing and rearticulating racial and class segmentations within those formations, in Puar the focus on disciplinary power does not just supplement an analysis of hegemonic struggle in order to specify its concrete articulatory moments. Rather, one tends to replace the other. This approach is fully developed in *Terrorist Assemblages*, where Puar's earlier analyses converge within a much stronger theoretical framework. As we shall see, Foucault's conceptualization of power, on which the earlier essays only loosely relied, gains center stage in the book, bringing the concept of homonationalism further in tension with an analysis of hegemony and counter-hegemony.

A central goal of *Terrorist Assemblages* is to identify and analyze "a transition under way in how queer subjects are relating to nation-states, particularly the United States, from being figures of death (i.e., the AIDS epidemic) to becoming tied to ideas of life and productivity (i.e., gay marriage and families)" (Puar 2007, xii). Such a transition, Puar argues, must be understood as contingent on the processes of racialization

activated in the context of the “war on terror”: “In *Terrorist Assemblages*, my primary interest is in this process of the management of queer life at the expense of sexually and racially perverse death in relation to the contemporary politics of securitization, Orientalism, terrorism, torture, and the articulation of Muslim, Arab, Sikh, and South Asian sexualities” (xiii). As these passages already suggest, life and death become not only political, but core *theoretical* concerns for Puar in *Terrorist Assemblages*. Indeed, her understanding of homonationalism is framed here, more consistently than in her earlier essays, by an analysis of what Foucault famously termed biopolitics: a technology of power “addressed to a multiplicity of men [*sic*], not to the extent that they are nothing more than their individual bodies, but to the extent that they form, on the contrary, a global mass that is affected by overall processes characteristic of birth, death, production, illness, and so on” (Foucault [1997] 2003, 242-243).

Even as disciplinary power and biopolitics overlap, for Foucault they do not coincide: “Unlike discipline, which is addressed to bodies, the new nondisciplinary power [biopolitics] is applied not to man-as-body but to the living man, to man-as-living-being; ultimately, if you like, to man-as-species” (Foucault [1997] 2003, 242).<sup>23</sup> On the one hand, that Puar’s analysis in *Terrorist Assemblages* primarily relies on Foucault’s conceptualization of biopolitics does not mean that she loses interest in the disciplining of queer bodies. As she writes, “biopolitics delineates not only which queers live and which queers die—a variable and contestable demarcation—but also *how* queers live and die” (Puar 2007, xii). In this respect, she follows Foucault himself, who argues that discipline and biopolitics, as distinct technologies of power operating on the scales of the individual body and of the population respectively, nonetheless work together.<sup>24</sup> Yet, on the other hand, Puar’s emphasis on biopolitics marks a certain shift compared to her previous analyses. By partially redirecting the attention from discipline to biopolitics, the figure of the terrorist (the “terrorist-monster-fag”) ceases to be understood primarily as a disciplinary figure and materializes, instead, in concrete populations targeted for death in the context of the U.S. “war on terror.”

While this shift takes place first and foremost by drawing on Foucault’s conceptualization of biopolitics, it also leads Puar to stress the limits of the concept and to turn to Achille Mbembe’s work on “necropolitics.” In his essay “Necropolitics” (2003), Mbembe asks: “Is the notion of biopower sufficient to account for the contemporary ways in which the political,

under the guise of war, of resistance, or of the fight against terror, makes the murder of the enemy its primary and absolute objective?” (12) The question is not meant to suggest that killing is entirely banished from Foucault’s understanding of biopolitics. As Mbembe highlights, Foucault himself does confront this problem: “how will the power to kill and the function of murder operate in this technology of power [biopolitics], which takes life as both its object and objective?” (Foucault [1997] 2003, 254) Foucault’s answer is: through racism. In his view, racism introduces a partition into the domain of life, articulating the “other” race as a threat to the life of the population, hence allowing the state to kill without its commitment to the cultivation of life being contradicted (254-263). Yet, while Foucault seems to regard the function of murder as a residue of a more ancient technology of power—sovereignty—that continues to operate within a regime nonetheless primarily characterized by the technologies of discipline and biopolitics, Mbembe foregrounds the “creation of *death-worlds*” (Mbembe 2003, 40) in the colonies, postcolonies, and new colonies of the world as a fundamental mark of *our* times.

By bringing discipline, biopolitics, and necropolitics together and in tension with one another, Puar aims to conceptualize the process by which, in the context of the “war on terror,” “[t]he cultivation of . . . homosexual subjects folded into life . . . is racially demarcated and paralleled by a rise in the targeting of queerly raced bodies [and populations] for dying” (Puar 2007, xii).<sup>25</sup> This theorization of homonationalism through the conceptual pair biopolitics/necropolitics has produced what we may consider a small but expanding terrain of analysis in its own right: “queer necropolitics.”<sup>26</sup> As the collective volume edited by Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman, and Silvia Posocco, *Queer Necropolitics* (2014), illustrates, the concept of queer necropolitics has expanded in the process: “Throughout this book, ‘queer necropolitics’ emerges as the concept-metaphor that illuminates and connects a range of spectacular and mundane forms of killing and of ‘letting die’ while simultaneously radically reimagining the meanings, purchase and stakes inherent in ‘queerness’ as a category of analysis and critique” (4). On the one hand, the emergence of queer necropolitics as a terrain of critique marks a key step in the hegemonic struggle around the color line in contemporary queer debates. As Haritaworn, Kuntsman, and Posocco note in the passage above, queerness itself as a category of analysis and as a political signifier must undergo a radical revision when confronted with its implication in the production of racialized “death-worlds.”<sup>27</sup> On the other

hand, the turn toward the biopolitical/necropolitical has been driving queer theoretical practice further away from hegemony, ideology, and consent as objects of analysis.<sup>28</sup>

In Puar's own analysis, this aspect is radicalized by her appropriation of a Deleuzian reading of Foucault. In "Postscript on the Societies of Control" (1992), Deleuze builds on Foucault's conceptualization of biopolitics in order to analyze what he terms "societies of control." But Deleuze's analysis of control mechanisms substantially *transforms* Foucault's understanding of biopolitics. For Foucault, biopolitics is first and foremost the domain of the state (Foucault [1997] 2003, 250). Deleuze's notion of control, instead, is by and large indifferent to the problem of state formation. What characterizes contemporary societies of control, in his view, are not the rigid apparatuses of the state, but the modulation mechanisms of the corporation: "The family, the school, the army, the factory are no longer the distinct analogical spaces that converge towards an owner—state or private power—but coded figures—deformable and transformable—of a single corporation that now has only stockholders" (Deleuze 1992, 6). And again: "Enclosures [the family, the school, the factory, the prison, and so forth] are *molds*, distinct castings, but controls are a *modulation*, like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to another, or like a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point" (4). In this Deleuzian reading of Foucault, power acquires a distinct level of abstraction *and* immediacy: a "power" that is not located in any specific apparatus but is granted an immediate grasp on its subjects.

It is through the filter of this Deleuzian reconceptualization of biopolitics as control that Puar appropriates the concept of "assemblage" from Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* ([1980] 1987). In *Terrorist Assemblages*, the concept works in concert with the biopolitical/necropolitical pair and performs a number of different yet related functions. First of all, it helps Puar insist on the contradictory nature of homonationalism and the contingency of its formation, for assemblages are combinations of elements that do not belong together by necessity.<sup>29</sup> In this respect, the concept of assemblage echoes that of articulation as developed by Hall. However, Hall distinguishes between the process of articulation through which different discursive elements cohere into an ideological discourse and the process through which that ideology manages to articulate a given field of social forces: "The 'unity' which matters is a linkage between that articulated discourse

and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected. Thus, a theory of articulation is both a way of understanding how ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse, and a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects” (Hall 1986c, 53). In Puar’s analysis, instead, assemblages absorb and neutralize any such distinction between ideological formations and political subjects.<sup>30</sup> More specifically, assemblages are modulations of power *without* subjects (either individual or collective). For, while granting “power” unprecedented pervasiveness, Deleuze also implodes the notion of a subject altogether: “We no longer find ourselves dealing with the mass/individual pair. Individuals have become ‘*dividuals*,’ and masses, samples, data, markets, or ‘*banks*’” (Deleuze 1992, 5).

This leads us to a second aspect of the concept of assemblage. Its deployment by Puar situates *Terrorist Assemblages* within what has been termed the “affective turn”—or, sometimes interchangeably, the “ontological turn”—in contemporary critical theory and cultural studies (see Clough and Halley 2007). This body of work, especially in its Foucauldian-Deleuzian inflections, suggests that affects, often understood as a pre-social and pre-subjective force, constitute the most promising challenge to various power formations. By invoking affect,<sup>31</sup> Puar calls into question the central role often accorded to representation (that is, ideology) in analyses of power. Following Deleuze, she argues that power primarily works in societies of control not through representation and interpellation, but by harnessing and channeling affect itself. Hence, she also contests representation as a privileged terrain for political practice.<sup>32</sup> The main target of her critique is identity politics. In her view, through representation, identity politics fixes the subject “[i]n the stillness of position,” producing a field in which “bodies actually lose their capacity for movement, for flow, for (social) change” (Puar 2007, 213).<sup>33</sup> However, I suggest that the bracketing of the social in this quote is not accidental, for it suggests, in spite of Puar’s intentions, that the passage from affective force to social force, from bodily movement to social movement, is a passage necessarily *mediated* by politico-ideological (representational) practices.

Closely intertwined with this critique of identity politics is, finally, Puar’s deployment of assemblage as an alternative to intersectionality. Unlike some of the critics discussed in the previous chapter who identify intersectionality as a critique of identity politics, Puar correctly reads

intersectionality *as* identity politics, yet with the goal of leaving both behind (Puar 2007, 211-213). In so doing, her analysis departs to a significant extent from the broader field of contemporary queer of color and queer diasporic critique.<sup>34</sup> This is most evident in her discussion of Sikh diasporic formations in the last chapter of *Terrorist Assemblages*. Puar and Rai's earlier essay ended with a critique of the practice of "turban profiling" in the aftermath of 9/11. In a typical queer diasporic gesture, Puar and Rai denounced the racial profiling of Sikh turbaned men and, at the same time, the consolidation of heteropatriarchy within Sikh diasporic formations in response to such a profiling. In the last chapter of *Terrorist Assemblages*, instead, a brief discussion of queer diaspora paves the way for a more detailed analysis of the turban as an affective assemblage. Here, Puar registers that in the context of the "war on terror" not only the subject wearing the turban, but the turban itself has become the target of racist violence. Hence, she suggests that we read "the turbaned man as an assemblage that cuts through such easy delineations between body and thing, an assemblage that fuses, but also scrambles into chaotic combinations, turban into body, cloth into hair, skin, oil, pores, destabilizing the presumed organicity of the body" (193). Such a reading privileges a conceptualization of affect and assemblage over the theoretico-political rubric of queer of color and queer diasporic critique.

Most importantly, by deploying assemblage against identity politics and intersectionality, Puar's analysis tends to erode what constitutes, according to my analysis so far, a key politico-ideological terrain for the articulation of a progressive counter-hegemonic bloc in times of homonormativity and homonationalism. Admittedly, this erosion takes place in theory, rather than theoretical *practice*. Puar (2012) herself implicitly acknowledges this difference in a later essay, where she tries to rethink, perhaps more generously, the relation between assemblage and intersectionality. Here, she insists on privileging assemblage over intersectionality by emphasizing, with Deleuze, control over discipline: "to dismiss assemblages in favor of retaining intersectional identitarian frameworks is to dismiss how societies of control tweak and modulate bodies as matter, not predominantly through signification or identity interpellation but rather through affective capacities and tendencies" (63).<sup>35</sup> However, Puar opens this essay by acknowledging the deployment of an intersectional vantage point in her own work:

On the one hand I have been a staunch advocate of what is now

commonly known as an intersectional approach: analyses that foreground the mutually co-constitutive forces of race, class, sex, gender, and nation. . . . At the same time, . . . I also argued in my book . . . that intersectionality as an intellectual rubric and a tool for political intervention must be supplemented—if not complicated and reconceptualized—by a notion of assemblage. (Puar 2012, 49-50)

While *Terrorist Assemblages* was far more determined in *replacing* intersectionality with assemblage than this passage wishes to suggest, it is true that an articulation of intersectionality and assemblage is what we find, *in practice*, at work in the book. Thus, the latter remains not only a key and necessary intervention in contemporary queer theory and LGBTQ politics, but also an archive that can be reconstructed on the terrain of politico-ideological critique. However, as I shall argue through the next two sections, some of the problems identified so far, which are sources of ambiguity in *Terrorist Assemblages*, are further amplified in Puar's later interventions, hand-in-hand with a significant expansion of the very concept of homonationalism.

*Homonationalism and Sexual Imperialism:  
Divergences and Convergences*

In 2002, the same year that Puar and Rai published the essay that inaugurated Puar's reflections of homonationalism, Joseph A. Massad published another essay that was going to attract much attention and provoke intense debates within the fields of queer theory and LGBTQ politics: "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World" (2002). In this piece, later included in his book *Desiring Arabs* (2007), Massad coins the notion of the "Gay International" to name the network of institutions, political formations, NGOs, and forms of knowledge—both in the West and in the Arab world—invested in "saving" Arab gays, lesbians, and homosexuals from their own societies and, in the process, according to Massad's analysis, "exporting" a Western understanding of sexuality to the Arab world.<sup>36</sup> Massad's and Puar's respective concerns overlap but also diverge. From her earlier interventions until *Terrorist Assemblages*, Puar predominantly focuses on the effects of 9/11 on heterogeneous formations in the United States, increasingly focusing on LGBTQ formations as key reproducers of

U.S. nationalist ideology at the time of the “war on terror.” Massad, instead, emphasizes the impact of the internationalization of Western LGBTQ politics on Arab social formations (in particular on Arab intellectual debates on sexual desire).<sup>37</sup> In other words, while Puar analyzes homonationalism as a specific politico-ideological formation emerging in the United States in the wake of 9/11, Massad more explicitly focuses on sexual imperialism, situating LGBTQ international organizations in an organic relation to Western imperialism. On the one hand, this has exposed Massad’s analysis to much more intense criticisms than Puar’s. Yet, on the other hand, some of Puar’s more recent interventions, following *Terrorist Assemblages*, have significantly shortened the distance between her arguments and Massad’s. In fact, as I shall argue, it is their very theoretical practices that, while initially diverging, have come later to increasingly converge.

Massad identifies the emergence of the Gay International in the 1980s and the process of its consolidation in the 1990s. Two prominent international organizations still active to this day—ILGA and IGLHRC—stand at the beginning of his essay as an exemplary starting point: “Organizations dominated by white Western males (the International Lesbian and Gay Association [ILGA] and the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission [IGLHRC]) sprang up to defend the rights of ‘gays and lesbians’ all over the world and to advocate on their behalf. . . . It is these missionary tasks, the discourse that produces them, and the organizations that represent them that constitute what I call the *Gay International*” (Massad 2002, 361-362). In line with the broader project of reconstructing the *intellectual* history of the representation of sexual desire among the Arabs within the context of Western imperialism in the Arab world—a project that will materialize in *Desiring Arabs*—Massad primarily focuses, already in this earlier essay, not on the politics of the Gay International as much as its production of knowledges. As he points out, “supporters of the Gay International’s missionary tasks have produced two kinds of literature on the Muslim world: an academic literature of historical, literary, and anthropological accounts . . . which purport to describe and explain ‘homosexuality’ in the past and present of the Arab and Muslim worlds; and journalistic accounts of the lives of so-called gays and (much less so) lesbians in the contemporary Arab and Muslim worlds” (362). Thus, even if Massad does not deploy any specific conceptualization of ideology—and I will return on this point—his text can be considered to offer an analysis of the ideological practices of the Gay International.

The three main arguments formulated by Massad, and those that have generated the most intense debates, posit that: a) the Gay International does not just aim to save Arab gays, lesbians, and homosexuals, but attempts to *produce* them as such in social formations where they did not exist before; b) this attempt so far has largely failed; or, to be more precise, its little success is unevenly distributed across class divides, for gay, lesbian, and homosexual identifications have emerged, in the Arab world, exclusively within the middle and upper classes; and c) the Gay International substantially contributes to the articulation of state as well as popular forms of homophobia in Arab countries, which it then represents as the target of its own missionary intervention.

Thus, first of all, Massad does not merely point out that the missionary efforts of the Gay International display an imperialist attitude. Rather, he argues that its practices and knowledges are organic to European and U.S. imperialism in that its self-proclaimed responsibility to save Arab homosexuals actually *produces* (or attempts to produce) the subjects it names: “it is the discourse of the Gay International that both produces homosexuals, as well as gays and lesbians, where they do not exist, and represses same-sex desires and practices that refuse to be assimilated into its sexual epistemology” (Massad 2002, 363). In order to make this argument, Massad turns to the first volume of Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* ([1976] 1978) and to its conceptualization of sexuality as a technology of disciplinary power consisting, first and foremost, of an “incitement to discourse.” As Foucault famously argued against a “repressive” understanding of power, “what distinguishes these last three centuries is the variety, the wide dispersion of devices that were invented for speaking about [sex]. . . . Rather than a massive censorship, . . . what was involved was a regulated and polymorphous incitement to discourse” (34). Even as Massad, in this earlier essay, makes explicit reference to Foucault only once and in a footnote, this understanding of sexuality is clearly the main theoretical point of support for his argument.<sup>38</sup> In the introduction to *Desiring Arabs*, he writes: “It is important to insist that not only did the concept of homosexuality itself not exist but also that if exclusive ‘homosexual’ male desires as such existed at all, it was not the main topic of discourse” (Massad 2007, 30-31).<sup>39</sup>

As one instance among many of the incitement to discourse articulated by the Gay International in the Arab world, Massad mentions an essay on the negotiations of gay identity and spaces in Beirut by Sofian Merabet (2004),<sup>40</sup> published on the *Middle East Report*:

Take the example of one sexual rights missionary writing in Lebanon. He accuses those Lebanese men who refuse to identify as “gay” and answer Western questions about their alleged gayness by insisting that “I’m not like that” as “self-hating” or even as expressing “homosexual homophobia.” This missionary even marshals Freud’s authority to define those unfit to define themselves as having a “split in the ego”: “This repudiation functions as the foundations [sic] of defense and is part of an individual protection mechanism that Freudian psychoanalysis calls ‘disavowal of difference.’” (Massad 2007, 43)

In this passage, Massad’s distinctive polemical tone leads him, in fact, to partially misread Merabet. It is true that the latter’s recourse to psychoanalytical explanations for the complexities of gay identification in Lebanon is unconvincing, and moreover sits uncomfortably with his own scattered invocations of more historical and sociological analyses of the same problem.<sup>41</sup> However, Massad gives us the impression that Merabet is castigating Lebanese men for actively resisting gay identification against a Western interpellation. Merabet, instead, analyzes such a disidentification in the context of a different encounter. Registering a lack of solidarity among men in the face of the homophobic policies of a donut shop in Beirut, which continued to function as a meeting place for men who desire men although it had repeatedly removed customers deemed “inappropriate” because of their “feminine” behavior, Merabet writes: “The general lack of solidarity . . . results in part from the fear of becoming socially ostracized. Moreover, this prevalent disengagement often has to do with the consequences of resisting self-identification. ‘*Ana mesh heek*’ (‘I’m not like that’), numerous gay men in Beirut will say, ambiguously, as they reject an ‘overtly feminine’ customer. Hence, the frequent disavowal of any kind of homosexual identity on their part” (Merabet 2004, 30-31). From this passage, Massad extrapolates a form of disidentification that Merabet, however, does not observe in the context of a Western interpellation (as Massad suggests), but rather in the encounter with male femininity. Thus, Merabet interprets what he regards as “internalized homophobia” among Lebanese gay men primarily as the result of a specific regime of hegemonic masculinity. Massad may be right in pointing out that Marabet misreads the situation and that such a rejection of gay or homosexual identification shall be understood, instead, as a friction between sexual imperialism and Arab social formations. Yet to make his point, he misreads Marabet rather than engaging in a rewriting of his analysis.

This problem notwithstanding, Massad's *misreading* of Marabet illustrates quite well not only his first key argument—that the Gay International tries to produce the subjects it names through an incitement to discourse—but also his second one: such an implantation of sexual identity has mostly failed, so far, in the Arab world. To be more precise, for Massad the little successes of the Gay International are distributed unevenly across class divides in Arab social formations: “It is among members of [the] wealthier segments of society that the Gay International has found native informants. Although members of these classes who engage in same-sex relations have more recently adopted a Western identity . . . they remain a minuscule minority among those men who engage in same-sex relations and who do not identify as ‘gay’ or express a need for gay politics” (Massad 2002, 372-373).<sup>42</sup> At this point in his analysis, Massad seems to implicitly integrate his Foucauldian approach with an analysis of hegemony. In the introduction to *Desiring Arabs*, he writes:

This book will chronicle how [the Western sexual] episteme, while hegemonic in intellectual and elite circles, has failed to become hegemonic among the population and how assiduous efforts are appealing to the state to employ its juridical and coercive abilities to render this sexual ontology—which is hegemonic in the West—dominant in the interstices of Arab societies and psyches in order to break down the resistance of these desiring Arabs. (Massad 2007, 49)

Such appeals to the state are articulated, according to Massad, not only by Western organizations working on the international scale, but also by Arab LGBTQ organizations both in the Arab world and in the diaspora. Examples of the latter are the now dissolved Al-Fatiha Foundation, the international LGBTQI Muslim organization founded by Pakistani American Faisal Alam in 1997 and mentioned earlier, as well as the Lebanese Helem, registered in Canada but based in Beirut, and the Palestinian alQaws based in Jerusalem. According to Massad, such organizations and the individuals working in them are not just passive targets of Western sexual imperialism, as his reference to them as “native informants” may otherwise suggest, but rather are organic to it. In his view, by fighting against homophobia and heteropatriarchy in the Arab world and by doing so while identifying as lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans, and queer Arabs, they form part and parcel of the Gay International.

Massad writes: “Because it has solicited and received some support from Arab and Muslim native informants who are mostly located in the United States and who accept its sexual categories and identities, the Gay International’s imperialist epistemological task is proceeding apace. . . . Its missionary achievement, however, will be the creation not of a *queer* planet but rather a *straight* one” (Massad 2002, 385).<sup>43</sup> Indeed, the third core argument put forward by Massad is that homophobia, rather than sexual liberation, continues to be the key import of Western imperialism in the Arab world, not only historically (in the encounter between Catholic and Victorian Europe and its colonies),<sup>44</sup> but also—paradoxically yet logically, according to Massad’s analysis—through the present efforts of the Gay International. For Massad, the latter does not simply try to export and globalize specific sexual identities, but the notion of sexual identity itself: a sexual epistemology grounded on the distinction between homosexuality and heterosexuality. He writes in *Desiring Arabs*: “While subjectivities in many non-Western contexts do not include heterosexuality and exclude homosexuality, as that very binarism is not part of their ontological structure, what the incitement and intervention of international human rights activism achieves is the replication of the very Euro-American human subjectivity its advocates challenge at home” (Massad 2007, 41). Thus, in Massad’s account, even as the Gay International continues to fail in its effort to incite gay, lesbian, and homosexual identifications at the level of popular common sense and beyond the middle and upper classes of the Arab world, it has been very successful in inciting the emergence of both state and popular homophobia, in a postcolonial context that already facilitates the ideological articulation of a link between same-sex practices and Western imperialism. As he puts it in an interview by Félix Boggio Éwanjé-Épée and Stella Magliani-Belkacem published on *Jadaliyya* in 2013, making explicit reference to the Lebanese organization Helem and the Palestinian alQaws, “what their intervention participates in is the heterosexualization of the majority of Arabs and the homonormativization of a minority of them” (Massad 2013).

Massad argues that this incitement of homophobia—and, strictly speaking, of heterosexuality itself—has been aided by two phenomena: “the spread of AIDS on an international scale, with the Western homophobic identification of it as the ‘gay’ disease, and the rise of Islamism in the Arab and Muslim worlds, with its stricter sexual mores” (Massad 2002, 374-375). Yet the Gay International is granted a central role in accelerating and

amplifying the process. Not only is this passage in the essay immediately followed by the assertion that “[t]he Gay International has succeeded in inciting discourse by attracting antigay Islamist and nationalist reactions to its efforts” (375), but the essay itself is followed, in *Desiring Arabs*, by a chapter devoted to such Islamist reactions. The latter are presented, both explicitly as well as implicitly by virtue of their position in the economy of the book, as a shift in discourse primarily effected by the Gay International itself.

A rather illustrative example of this dynamic, as well as of Massad’s indifference to the relations of force involved in the production and consolidation of homophobia, is his commentary on a polemical exchange that took place in 1996 between the Arabic newspaper *Al-Hayah*, based in London, and Ramzi Zakharia, a Palestinian American gay man who in 1989 had founded in Washington, D.C. the Gay and Lesbian Arabic Society (GLAS). When the editor-in-chief of *Al-Hayah* referred to gays with the Arabic term *shuthuth* (sexual deviance) in the context of a tirade against Western television normalizing deviancy, Zakharia wrote a letter of protest to the newspaper. Massad notes that the letter did not focus on the censorious content of the editorial as much as on the term employed to name gays: the term, Zakharia wrote, “insults me as an Arab who desires people of the same sex as it insults millions like me” (Zakharia, quoted in Massad 2002, 378). According to Massad’s reconstruction, Zakharia went on explaining not only that homosexuality is genetic and that homosexual relations are based on sex *and* love, but also that his organization is on the front line, together with the feminist movement, in the struggle to eradicate patriarchy from the Arab world. To Zakharia’s letter, the editor replied that he simply used the Arabic term for homosexuals and that the only other term available—*mithliyyah* (sameness)—is unknown to most readers. He then reaffirmed that both him and the newspaper *Al-Hayah* oppose sameness, deviance, or however one wants to call homosexuality, “for reasons of traditions, religion, and inherited conventions, but without insulting anyone and without coercion, imposition, or oppression and without making a case out of it, as this was not the intention . . . moreover, the editor in chief admits his ignorance of this issue more generally as he did not realize that this issue was on the table” (al-Khazin, quoted in Massad 2002, 379). Massad, rather surprisingly, comments:

Indeed, [the issue] was not [on the table], as al-Khazin’s concern was

with the spread of “deviance” from the West to the Arab world and not its actual existence in the Arab world. Neither the editor of *al-Hayah* nor the newspaper itself would have declared explicit opposition to “sameness” in the Arab world had Zakharia, a resident of the United States, not incited this condemnation—which will affect not him but people in the Arab world. (Massad 2002, 379)

Thus, even as Massad affirms that the editor’s “concern about ‘degeneration’ is borrowed wholesale from late-nineteenth-century European discourse” (Massad 2002, 378), and even as he adds a remark, in the version of the same passage appearing in *Desiring Arabs*, about the fact that the editor “feigned ignorance” on the actual existence of same-sex practices in the Arab world (Massad 2007, 179), he nonetheless insists on identifying Zakharia’s letter as the primary *cause* of the homophobia articulated in the course of this exchange.

This misreading of the relations of force involved in the link between the Gay International and the production of homophobia in the Arab world appears even more striking within the broader analysis developed by Massad in *Desiring Arabs*. The book offers an intellectual history of the representation of sexual desire among Arabs (especially Arab men) from the late nineteenth to the early twenty-first century. It focuses on the debates taking place among Arab intellectuals, yet arguing that such debates unfolded in relation to the vicissitudes of Western imperialism in the Arab world and the attendant production of Western Orientalist knowledge on Arab societies and cultures, including sexual desires (see Boone 2014). Through the reading of a vast archive, Massad shows that from the Arab “renaissance” (*Nahdah*) onward—that is, from the mid-nineteenth century to the present—Arab intellectuals have increasingly engaged with the question of sex and sexual desire as a barometer of civilizational development or decadence. Massad argues that the emergence of this correlation and of the very notions of “civilization,” “culture,” “development,” “degeneration,” “decadence,” “progress,” “renaissance,” and so forth, is symptomatic of the influence of Orientalism on Arab intellectual life (Massad 2007, 5-29).

The earlier essay on the Gay International appears as the third chapter in *Desiring Arabs*, preceded by two chapters that analyze the ways in which Arab intellectuals from the late nineteenth century to the 1970s engaged in the enterprise of writing the history of Arab civilization (*tamaddun* or

*hadarah*) while emphasizing the sexual desires and practices of Arabs and Muslims. According to Massad, these efforts were undertaken with a distinct pedagogical purpose, positing different readings of the Arab past as the basis for present and future progress (*taqaddum*). Focusing especially on the conflicting readings of Abbasid poet Abu Nuwas, and especially of his *ghazal* in the masculine (poems composed for young boys), Massad argues that same-sex desires and practices came increasingly to be expelled from the definition of a legitimate Arab heritage (*turath*) and to be identified with degeneration (*inhihal*) and civilizational decadence (*inhitat*). It is precisely by borrowing all of these notions from the European discourse, the centrality of sex and sexual desire to their definition, hence the Orientalist perception of the Arabs as sexually perverse vis-à-vis European Victorian morals, that Arab intellectuals themselves, throughout the twentieth century, came to expel same-sex practices from the definition of Arab and Muslim “culture.”

As Massad himself puts it in the interview on *Jadaliyya*, “[t]he sexual order of the postcolonial context to which contemporary western sexual identities are introduced is already the effect of a colonial epistemology that has been translated and iterated earlier. As I chronicle in *Desiring Arabs*, the European shaming of non-Europeans on the basis of sexual desires and practices begins at the dawn of the colonial encounter, inciting a reactive discourse of assimilation into (and at time difference from) European norms” (Massad 2013). Thus, it remains difficult to understand why Massad himself would repeatedly affirm that homophobia in the Arab world is first and foremost a product of the contemporary Gay International. Peter Drucker makes this point in his critical review of the book: “The irony of this line of argument is that Massad provides so much evidence that hostility to same-sex sexualities in the Arab world long predated the arrival of LGBT movements. He describes a host of modern Arab attempts to deny, downplay or condemn traditional Arab openness to same-sex sexual desire” (Drucker 2008).

Massad insists that such attempts on the part of Arab intellectuals remained relatively confined to the terrain of intellectual debate until the appearance of the Gay International on the international political scene. Yet, even if this was the case, if his own lengthy and sophisticated analysis of those debates is not to be reduced to a redundant lingering on a relatively irrelevant field of knowledge production, the latter must be accorded a more substantial role in shaping contemporary conflicts around

sexuality in the Arab world. In other words, whether one considers the Gay International to have *produced* homophobia in the Arab world, as Massad sometimes seems to suggest, or one instead considers it to have significantly accelerated and amplified the process, as he more carefully suggests in other passages, one is nonetheless privileging its determining force compared to other conjunctural elements that *Desiring Arabs* foregrounds as central. In light of Massad's own analysis, for instance, the homophobia with which *Al-Hayah* responded to Ramzi Zakharia's claim of an Arab gay identity is hardly the direct product of the incitement to discourse articulated by Zakharia himself. Rather, that homophobia had been prepared by a vast (colonial and postcolonial) archive of intellectual debates. In fact, despite his opposite conclusions, Massad seems to suggest as much when he mentions that the editor-in-chief's "concern about 'degeneration' is borrowed wholesale from late-nineteenth-century European discourse" (Massad 2002, 378).

As this discussion makes clear, Massad's analysis is uncompromisingly critical of queer diasporic formations, which he regards as organic to the Gay International. If Puar, in *Terrorist Assemblages*, to a certain extent departs from the theoretical practices that by and large define the contemporary field of queer of color and queer diasporic critique—that is, she departs from intersectionality theoretically even as she practices it in her analysis—Massad, a diasporic intellectual himself in the United States, maintains no theoretical or political affiliations with queer formations either in the diaspora or in the Arab world. This difference between Massad and Puar is well illustrated, for instance, by their respective critiques of the Al-Fatiha Foundation. As I already mentioned, Massad considers this international LGBTQI Muslim organization founded in the United States to be a quintessential example of the diasporic segment of the Gay International. In fact, he attributes to it a key role in shaping the Egyptian government's management of the infamous Queen Boat controversy in 2001, that is, the arrest of 55 men charged with the accusation of "offending religion" and "practicing debauchery" because of their same-sex practices.<sup>45</sup> According to Massad's analysis, the arrests caused "a torrent of media collusion with the government, condemning the practice of 'deviance' as a new Western imposition" as well as an international campaign by the Gay International (Massad 2002, 382). Here, he emphasizes the role played by Al-Fatiha's founder Faisal Alam:

Al-Fatiha's now infamous founder Faisal Alam . . . not only called

for worldwide demonstrations in support of the arrested men, but also solicited the signatures of members of the U.S. Congress, who were recruited by openly gay Massachusetts congressman Barney Frank and by the anti-Arab and anti-Egyptian Tom Lantos to sign a petition threatening a cutoff of U.S. aid to Egypt if the government failed to release the men. (Massad 2002, 382)

Thus, upon recalling such mobilizations by Al-Fatiha as well as other international organizations, Massad argues that both the Egyptian government and the Egyptian press reacted with “more vilification campaigns of deviant sex as an imperialist plot, as evidenced by the real alliances that the Gay International makes with imperialists—Al-Fatiha’s activities were seen as particularly egregious” (Massad 2002, 383). Once again, even as the political practice of Al-Fatiha can and must be the subject of critique, a misreading of the relations of force—and quite a deliberate one, it seems—leads Massad to *privilege* the role of the Gay International in consolidating homophobia. Puar, instead, criticizes Alam in her analysis of the U.S. reactions to the Abu Ghraib scandal. As I argued earlier, for her Alam participated in the queer racialization of Arab populations by insisting that the sexual tortures violated Arab and Muslim “culture” and must be condemned on these grounds. Yet unlike Massad, and underscoring in fact the salience of a conjunctural intersectional reading, she adds: “I want to underscore the complex dance of positionality that Muslim and Arab groups such as the Muslim American Society and especially Al-Fatiha must perform in these times, during which a defense of ‘Muslim sexuality’ through the lens of culture easily becomes co-opted into racist agendas” (Puar 2007, 91).

Thus, it is not surprising that Massad’s analysis has provoked more intense and polemic debates than Puar’s. Some have noted, indeed, Massad’s indifference to concrete relations of force. Peter Drucker, in his review of *Desiring Arabs*, affirms that “[t]he power of [the Gay International] is derisible compared to that of the former colonial empires, the U.S. military, major multinationals or the international financial institutions. . . . Arab governments may vilify these organizations in their propaganda, but Massad provides little evidence that they have had any significant effect on law or policy, even negatively” (Drucker 2008). Similarly, Jason Ritchie states: “Massad’s critique . . . vastly overstates the power of the Gay International and misreads the actual implications of its project” (Ritchie 2010, 566). However, most critics focus on the charge

of “inauthenticity” that, in their view, Massad formulates against Arabs who identify and organize politically as gays, lesbians, or homosexuals. Massad himself, in turn, is accused of “nativism.” Thus, Ritchie suggests that Massad’s account “looks a lot like an orientalist fantasy of ‘authentic’ Arab sexuality” (567) and Drucker argues that *Desiring Arabs* “tends to idealize the indigenous sexual culture of the Arab world” (Drucker 2008). Amal Amireh, referring to the work of alQaws in Israel-Palestine, laments that “these queer activists have to contend with accusations that they are embracing an ‘inauthentic’ identity that is foreign to Arab and Muslim culture” (Amireh 2010, 644). And Tom Boellstorff, who is alone among these commentators in directing the critique against both Massad and Puar, states that their work “often presumes that persons outside the West terming themselves lesbian or gay are inauthentic” (Boellstorff 2007, 23).

Strictly related to the question of “inauthenticity” is, according to virtually all of Massad’s critics, the question of “agency.” Sahar Amer writes: “Reading Massad’s work, one gets the sense that Arabs are passive, always in a reactive position vis-à-vis the West, never actors or in charge of defining their own lives or sexualities. . . . If for the Gay International, an Arab who rejects the label gay is victim of self-hatred or internalized homosexual homophobia, it would appear that for Massad, an Arab who asserts a gay identity is a victim of orientalist fantasies, of colonial imposition, and of the universalizing claims of Western gay rights groups” (Amer 2010, 652). Both critiques, strictly speaking, proceed from a misreading of Massad’s analysis. On the one hand, Massad insists that the recovering of a more “authentic” Arab sexual culture by no means forms part of his project. In fact, he devotes the first two chapters of *Desiring Arabs* to exposing how such pedagogical efforts at recovering an Arab cultural heritage are themselves products of the colonial encounter, for Arab intellectuals borrowed the very notions of “culture,” “heritage,” and “civilization” from the European discourse in the first place. On the other hand, concerning the question of agency, I have been arguing so far that Massad considers LGBTQ formations in the Arab world and the diaspora to be organic to the Gay International, not its victims. Thus, in the third chapter of his most recent book *Islam in Liberalism* (2015), a chapter where he replies to most of his critics, Massad comments: “explaining the process through which a small number of people outside Europe and its settler colonies come to adopt the term ‘gay’ is not a refusal to recognize the agency of these individuals but rather a *recognition* of

the complicity of such agency with gay universalism” (250). Indeed, it is precisely the insistence on this complicit agency—often morphing into a focus on Arab LGBTQ formations themselves as *the* central actors in the heterosexualization of the Arab world—that granted Massad the critique of a distinct indifference to concrete relations of force.

Yet these partial misreadings of Massad’s analysis are justified by his polemical tone as well as the inconsistencies to be found in his own texts. His essay on the Gay International, for instance, ends with the following assertion: “the Gay International’s imperialist epistemological task is proceeding apace with little opposition from the majority of the sexual beings it wants to ‘liberate’ and whose social and sexual worlds it is destroying in the process” (Massad 2002, 189-190). Such polemical passages punctuate Massad’s interventions and seem to contradict time and again *both* his assertion that the existence of a more “authentic” Arab sexual culture does not concern him *and* his denial of an underestimation of Arab agency in his work. Most importantly, Massad is rather ambiguous regarding the *nature* of the imperialism that he attributes to the Gay International—especially to its segments in the Arab world and the diaspora. A specific polemic, for instance, developed around the LGBTQ group Helem based in Beirut, Lebanon. After Massad for the first time explicitly referred to the group as part of the Gay International, in an interview published on the online magazine *ResetDOC* (Massad 2009a), Ghassan Makarem—Helem’s executive director—replied with a letter to the magazine, titled “We are not Agents of the West” (2009).<sup>46</sup> In the letter, Makarem both summarizes the history of Helem and insists on its anti-imperialist politics.<sup>47</sup> He recalls:

In July 2006, Helem was also one of the first organizations to react to the Israeli aggression and become part of the massive grassroots solidarity movements that sprung up during the attacks. The gay and lesbian community center became part of Beirut’s busiest relief headquarters during 4 weeks of bombing. Joining with allies from the anti-war movement, environmentalists, student groups, collectives, and Palestinian refugee associations, Helem became part of Samidoun, the largest independent campaign in solidarity with the resistance and working for the relief of civilian refugees and war victims. . . . In line with this position, Helem had called for the boycott of Jerusalem World Pride earlier that summer. Does Massad seriously believe that the Gay International was behind all this? (Makarem 2009)

The dialogue between Massad and Makarem on *ResetDOC* is not, as such, of particular interest, yet it forced Massad to specify in what ways organizations such as Helem could be considered to be organic to Western imperialism. Thus, in the interview published on *Jadaliyya* four years after this polemical exchange with Makarem, Massad states:

I have never called “LGBT Arabs” agents of imperialism, as Gay Internationalists often misquote me. . . . I have however said that Gay Internationalist Arabs are complicit with imperialism, and their complicity is not unlike the complicity of nationalist Arabs or Islamist Arabs. . . . The fact that all of these groups (and in the case of Gay Internationalists, I am referring here to those who are located in Beirut and Israel) are anti-imperialist in the sense that they oppose the imperial political, economic, and military presence of the United States or European countries in the Arab world, that they oppose US wars on the Arab and Muslim worlds, that they oppose Israeli and Zionist aggression against Palestine and the Palestinians, is well established in the official statements of their organizations and their literature. I am speaking of complicity at the level of epistemology and ontology. (Massad 2013)<sup>48</sup>

This passage opens up a key question of theoretical practice. Indeed, the problem is not so much that Massad often seems to forget the distinction he posits here between epistemological and political imperialism.<sup>49</sup> More importantly, his own analysis loses any theoretical and political salience if the relation between epistemological and political imperialism—that is, between the economic, the political, and the ideological—is not properly conceptualized. In other words: if the epistemological imperialism that Massad attributes to organizations such as Helem or alQaws does not necessarily coincide with, or in some other ways *relate* to, the political project of imperialism, why would Massad devote his intellectual energy to exposing it with so much zeal?

I address this question—as a question of theoretical practice—in the next section of this chapter. Before I proceed to do so, however, let me briefly return to Puar in order to signal a number of diverges and convergences, precisely on this terrain, between her analysis of homonationalism and Massad’s analysis of the Gay International. As I already mentioned, *Terrorist Assemblages* has not incited the same critical outburst of which Massad,

instead, has been the target.<sup>50</sup> This is so, in part, because of their different readings of the relation between sexual politics and imperialism—that is, their different understandings of sexual imperialism. Massad makes this point in the interview on *Jadaliyya*: “Puar’s fine book . . . proceeds from an objection not to the universalization of sexuality or of sexual identities, which, if I understand her correctly, are taken as givens in her book, but rather the specific nationalization of gayness in the United States (and also in Europe) in the form of homonationalism (Puar’s important coinage) and the imperial form of its internationalization” (Massad 2013). Hence, he argues that Puar’s analysis does not force Arab LGBTQ formations to face the impasse with which his own analysis, instead, confronts them. On the contrary, “Gay Internationalist organizations like Helem and the Israeli-based al-Qaws and their supporters find a way out of their ontological and epistemological complicity with imperialism in annexing Puar’s intelligent and very useful book to their cause, as they see themselves as opponents of US homonationalism and its imperial pretensions, thus exonerating themselves of the charge of imperial complicity” (Massad 2013). This point is reiterated in *Islam in Liberalism*, yet with an emphasis on Puar’s own support for such political formations: “[Puar’s] criticisms target the imperial circuits through which the dissemination of sexuality is enacted but not its universalization as a category and as epistemology and ontology, which she seems to think can be universalized through non-imperial channels” (Massad 2015, 270). What Massad has in mind, in this passage, is Puar’s explicit support for alQaws.

Puar’s support for alQaws materialized, for instance, in her participation in the first U.S. LGBTQ delegation to Palestine in January 2012.<sup>51</sup> However, even as she continues to express her support for alQaws as well as other formations organizing at the crossroads of sexual politics and anti-imperialism in Israel-Palestine, such as Palestinian Queers for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (PQBDS), Puar recently engaged in a polemical exchange with Palestinian activists that closely resembles the one between Massad and Makarem. The exchange concerned the nature of the state practice of “pinkwashing” in Israel-Palestine and of the “pinkwatching” activism emerged in order to expose and counter the former. The term pinkwashing, in the context of Israel-Palestine, describes the attempt on the part of the state to diverge attention from the occupation and its human rights violations by presenting Israel to the world as the only safe space for gays in the Middle East. Paradigmatic of this practice

is the extension to gays and lesbians—particularly through gay tourism—of the campaign “Brand Israel,” launched in 2005 by the Israeli state in consultation with U.S. marketing firms in order to re-brand the image of Israel worldwide (especially in the United States) as “relevant and modern.”<sup>52</sup> In turn, pinkwashing activism in Israel-Palestine and abroad labors both to counter such a representation and to gather solidarity with the broader Palestinian struggle. As I shall argue, Puar’s disagreement with queer Palestinian rights activists over the nature of pinkwashing and pinkwashing coincides with an expansion of her understanding of homonationalism and, at the same time, brings her analyses closer to Massad’s critique of epistemic imperialism.<sup>53</sup>

In 2012, *Jadaliyya* published an intervention by Puar and Maya Mikdashi, titled “Pinkwashing and Pinkwashing: Interpenetration and its Discontents” (2012a), which offers a critique of pinkwashing activism. The main point put forward by Puar and Mikdashi is that “both pinkwashing and pinkwashing operate within and reproduce a discourse of homonationalism” (Puar and Mikdashi 2012a). This is so, in their view, because homonationalism has become the necessary terrain for the articulation of *any* sexual (identity) politics:

Many progressive critics miss the point: pinkwashing . . . is part of a larger project to anchor all politics within the axis of identity and identitarian (and identifiable) groups. Thus, critiques of pinkwashing, who assume an international queer camaraderie, repeat a central tenet of homonationalism: homosexuals should be in solidarity and empathize with each other because they are homosexual. (Puar and Mikdashi 2012a)

This argument, which had been already formulated in a previous intervention by Mikdashi (2011), relies on a significant expansion of the concept of homonationalism that punctuates Puar’s writings after *Terrorist Assemblages*. For instance, in a brief essay titled “Rethinking Homonationalism” (2013a), upon noticing the “reductive,” tactical applications of the concept in activist projects, Puar states: “Instead, . . . I have been thinking about it as an analytic to apprehend state formation and a structure of modernity” (337). In fact, what Puar suggests here is that homonationalism be understood as another name for biopolitics itself.<sup>54</sup> It is on the basis of such an expansion that any formation privileging sexuality, or at least deploying sexuality, as a terrain

of political organizing and ideological critique can be said to *reproduce* the discourse of homonationalism.<sup>55</sup>

Yet, especially as Puar and Mikdashi engage, from this perspective, in a critique of specific political practices, the conceptual expansion of homonationalism must not be regarded exclusively as a theoretical question, but as a question of theoretical practice. In their response, C. Heike Schotten and Haneen Maikey—the former a queer scholar and activist based in the United States, the latter a Palestinian pinkwatching activist and co-founder of both alQaws and PQBDS—make this point:

[Puar and Mikdashi's] article left us wondering, "how can this criticism help to advance our work?" Part of the reason we believe we can find no answer to this question is because the critique of "they" and "them" unfolds in a moralizing manner that would otherwise have been impossible if the authors had included themselves within the movement. . . . Unfortunately, this dynamic is nothing new in solidarity work. Many of us may recall working under the powerful shadow of Joseph Massad's work on the Gay International. (Schotten and Maikey 2012)

In their own rejoinder to this response, Puar and Mikdashi neither assume a tone as polemic as the one that Massad reserves for his critics, nor align themselves with Massad's view of Helem and alQaws as formations organic to the Gay International.<sup>56</sup> Even as Puar and Mikdashi reaffirm their critique of pinkwatching activism within the framework of an expanded notion of homonationalism—"Like modernity, homonationalism can be resisted and re-signified, but not opted out of: we are all conditioned by it and through it" (Puar and Mikdashi 2012b)—they insist that their first piece be understood as a contribution to the struggle conducted by LGBTQ formations in Israel-Palestine. However, in spite of these divergences, Schotten and Maikey are right in registering a convergence between Massad and Puar and Mikdashi on the terrain of theoretical practice. They do converge, indeed, in their theoretical indifference to the concrete relations between theory and practice.

As Massad insists on the "epistemic complicity" of Helem or AlQaws with Western imperialism regardless of their participation in concrete anti-imperialist struggles, Puar and Mikdashi affirm that pinkwatching activism "reproduces" homonationalism simply by privileging sexual identity as a politico-ideological standpoint. But, as I asked earlier:

if epistemic imperialism is kept entirely disarticulated from politico-economic imperialism and is preserved as a terrain of critique in its own right, what is the political or even theoretical salience of such a critique? Or, as Schotten and Maikey put it, how does this critique help advancing political work? In order to address these questions, in the next section I briefly turn to 1980s debates on theoretical practice involving Edward W. Said, Michel Foucault, and Stuart Hall. As Said and Foucault are key theoretical references of Massad and Puar, my goal is to explore the relation between theory and theoretical practice: what is the link between Puar's and especially Massad's indifference to the relation between theory and practice *and* the specific theoretical apparatuses that they deploy?

### *Theory, Practice, and Theoretical Practice*

Massad repeatedly makes reference, in his analysis, to Said's work on Orientalism and on the relations between culture and imperialism. Yet there are important differences between their respective understandings of culture, which Massad does not acknowledge. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said writes: "Because [the colonial] redrawing of the world's map was so dramatic, we have lost (and perhaps have been encouraged to lose) an accurate historical, let alone moral sense that even in the contentiousness of struggle, imperialism and its opponents fought over the same terrain, contested the same history" (Said 1993, 199).<sup>57</sup> By highlighting that "there are two sides," Said echoes Hall's assertion that "in the arena of ideological struggle . . . two can play at the game" (Hall [1980] 1988, 140). In Said's analysis, culture does not immediately correspond to ideology, for he reserves the former term for the more circumscribed terrain of high cultural production, literature in particular. Yet, even as overlooking this point would mean obscuring a number of Said's irreducible concerns with aesthetic form and content, it is undeniable that his approach to culture and literature comes very close to Hall's approach to the problem of ideology:

As I use the word, "culture" means two things in particular. First of all it means all those practices, like the arts of description, communication, and representation, that have relative autonomy from the economic, social, and political realms and that often exist in aesthetic forms, one of whose principal aim is pleasure. . . . Second, . . . [culture] is a source

of identity, and a rather combative one at that, as we see in recent “returns” to culture and tradition. . . . In this second sense culture is a sort of theater where various political and ideological causes engage one another. (Said 1993, xii-xiii)

Thus, culture (like ideology, or even *as* ideology)<sup>58</sup> constitutes for Said a terrain of struggle that relates to the political and the economic within a regime of relative autonomy; that is, they exist in a relation of articulation, rather than expressive correspondence. On this terrain there are (at least) two sides, and both can play at the game. This is, indeed, one of the lessons of *Culture and Imperialism* and of Said’s work as a whole.

I have briefly recalled Said’s approach to culture not to suggest that Massad or Puar, instead, posit sexuality as a mere by-product of more “real” politico-economic relations of force. Neither of them regards sexual imperialism as a superstructural expression of imperialism at large. On the contrary, as I argued, both grant sexuality a fundamental role in articulating imperial domination. Yet this is the case not because they follow Said or Hall in conceptualizing the relations between the economic, the political, and the ideological from a non-reductionist perspective. Rather, following Foucault, they regard sexuality as a biopolitical technology of power in its own right whose conceptualization is by and large indifferent to the boundaries between those different levels of the social formation. Thus, ironically, their respective analyses are not grounded on a specific understanding of ideology but end up deploying—implicitly—a rather totalizing and reductionist understanding of ideological power. For Puar (and Mikdashi), any political formation that articulates itself and its struggles through sexual identity inevitably reproduces the “discourse” of homonationalism. For Massad, similarly, any such political formation is organic to the Gay International, hence to the broader project of Western imperialism. By bypassing a conceptualization of the articulations between the economic, the political, and the ideological, as well as an analysis of the relations of force presiding over such articulations, both Massad and Puar seem to be unable to identify any crack within the social formations they set out to analyze. As Said himself puts it while formulating, via Gramsci, one of his most explicit critiques of Foucault, “[e]ven if we leave aside the complexities of Gramsci’s philosophy and the political organization it entails, as well as what he calls ‘the conquest of civil society,’ there is the theoretical insistence, against Foucault, of a guaranteed insufficiency in the dominant

culture towards which it is possible to mount an attack” (Said 1986, 154).

The redeployment of a totalizing and reductionist notion of ideology in the absence of its proper conceptualization is perhaps more evident in the case of Massad than Puar. While the latter is resolute in addressing imperialism and anti-imperialism through a Deleuzian reading of Foucault, Massad, as I mentioned, seems to implicitly supplement Foucault with an analysis of hegemony. Indeed, the key insight of his analysis is that the incitement to discourse hegemonic in the West fails to gain hegemony when deployed by the Gay International in the Arab world, that is, it fails to materialize as common sense except among specific segments of the middle and upper classes. However, he barely explains *why* this is the case. In the interview on *Jaddiyya*, he states: “I am not arguing that these sexual identities always fail to institute themselves inside or outside the West and that this failure is total, rather that they succeed and fail differentially across classes and countries depending on the effect of capitalist structures, and their production of certain lifestyles, forms, and modes of intimate life on different classes, which are in turn the outcome of uneven capitalist development” (Massad 2013). In this passage, Massad seems to suggest a rather economic reading of the problem at hand.<sup>59</sup> Thus, on the one hand, the ideological power of the Gay International is as total as to impede any counter-ideological articulation of sexual identity outside its grasp. Yet, on the other hand, the absence of any actual theory of ideology allows Massad to shift seamlessly, from a Foucauldian approach to sexuality as a fully autonomous technology of power to an economic reading of sexuality and sexual identities as mere effects of uneven capitalist development. In fact, it is precisely his appropriation of Foucault that opens up the space for such contradictions.<sup>60</sup>

Said, instead, has been far more careful in this respect. On the one hand, his notion of Orientalism is highly indebted to Foucault’s work. In *Orientalism*, he writes:

I have found it useful here to employ Michel Foucault’s notion of a discourse, as described by him in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and in *Discipline and Punish*, to identify Orientalism. My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. (Said 1978a, 3)<sup>61</sup>

Yet, on the other hand, already in *Orientalism* and increasingly in his subsequent works, Said limits some of the abstraction to be found in Foucault by turning, among others, to Gramsci: “Gramsci has made the useful analytic distinction between civil society and political society. . . . Culture, of course, is to be found operating within civil society, where the influence of ideas, of institutions, and of other persons works not through domination but by what Gramsci calls consent” (Said 1978a, 6-7). Thus, *Orientalism* is conceptualized by Said as a discourse (in Foucault’s sense) whose operations, however, are circumscribed by the boundaries that make up the edifice of modern social formations, rather than dispersed across those boundaries. In fact, the Foucauldian notion of discourse is deployed to characterize *Orientalism* as a specific form of ideology that possesses the consistency and the internal constraints of a disciplinary formation, not to replace the notion of ideology altogether.

The notion of ideology, coupled with a conceptualization and a concrete analysis of its relations to the social formation as a whole, forces one to identify and never let go of the specific modes and points of application of power in a specific situation—it impedes one to *abstract* from those articulatory points and from the boundaries that define the various terrains of articulation (such as the boundary between state and civil society). According to Said, instead, Foucault’s understanding of power crosses and neutralizes all such boundaries: “Many of the people who admire and have learned from Foucault, including myself, have commented on the undifferentiated power he seemed to ascribe to modern society” (Said 1986, 151).<sup>62</sup> As he puts it elsewhere and more explicitly, Foucault’s work lacks, in his view, “something that resembles Gramsci’s analyses of *hegemony*, historical blocks, ensembles of relationships” (Said 1978b, 710). Said does not lament a lack of historical analysis on the part of Foucault. The latter’s sophisticated readings of multiple historical archives—his archaeology—would easily contradict any such claim. However, he suggests that Foucault too easily shifts from the concrete to the abstract without retaining the concrete as an *integral* element of his very conceptualization of power. As Said puts it, “the difficulty posed by Foucault’s writings is when he moves from specific historical study to more general theoretical claims. It is when Foucault’s language becomes general . . . that the methodological breakthrough becomes the theoretical trap” (Said 1983, 244). That this assessment appears in Said’s famous essay “Traveling Theory,” where he reflects on the limitations of the circulation of any theory away from the

time, space, and problematic that it was originally meant to address and from which it organically emerged, is noteworthy. Indeed, some of the limitations that Said identifies in Foucault's theoretical practice are less acutely at work in Foucault's own analyses than in the appropriations of Foucault's conceptualization of power by some of his readers—such as Puar and Massad.<sup>63</sup>

According to Said as well as Hall, who share many of these concerns, one of the most salient consequences of Foucault's undifferentiated conceptualization of power is his incapacity to offer any meaningful account of resistance.<sup>64</sup> Said argues that with Foucault's "hypertrophied vision of power . . . went also a singular lack of interest in the force of effective resistance to it, in choosing particular sites of intensity" (Said 1986, 151). Or, as Hall puts it, it is not resistance as such, but rather a tentative *explanation* of resistance that disappears from Foucault's analysis: "Nobody knows where it comes from. Fortunately, it goes on being there, always guaranteed: in so far as there is power, there is resistance. But at any one moment, when you want to know how strong the power is, and how strong the resistance is, and what is the changing balance of forces, it's impossible to assess because such a field of force is not conceptualizable in his model" (Hall 1986c, 48).<sup>65</sup> According to Hall, this is the case because Foucault reconstructs a plurality of discursive regimes but does not analyze the relations of force between them *and* the specific practices articulating this plurality as a "formation," that is, not just a "unity" but a structured totality. In his view, in the seamless unity that results from Foucault's analyses, the concrete politico-ideological cracks that might open up spaces for resistance disappear from view, even as the presence of resistance is "guaranteed" by the pervasive presence of power.

Importantly, Hall argues that this model leads to the risk of transforming the discursive regime into just another name for the dominant ideology, yet without conceptualizing it as such: "If Foucault is to prevent the regime of truth from collapsing into a synonym for the dominant ideology, he has to recognize that there are different regimes of truth in the social formation. And these are not simply 'plural'—they define an ideological field of force" (Hall 1986c, 48-49). What Hall suggests in this passage is that, despite Foucault's abandonment of the concept of ideology because of its totalizing tendencies (Foucault [1977] 1980, 118),<sup>66</sup> this conceptual abandonment may provoke in fact a return of the concept with a vengeance. Indeed, as I argued at length in the first chapter, Hall does share a critique

of the totalizing character of ideology in much Marxist theory. Yet, rather than abandoning the concept, he thinks through its limitations in order to displace it, following Gramsci, on a different terrain. Following Hall, it is my argument that not so much a recognition of agency—as virtually all of his critics point out—but first and foremost a good conceptualization of ideology might have forced Massad to provide a different analysis of sexual imperialism. Similarly, it might have prevented both Massad and Puar from entering into polemics with Helem and alQaws and from abstracting their politico-ideological struggles from the concrete fields of forces of their emergence.

The discussion so far suggests that Massad's and Puar's conceptualizations of power—borrowed from Foucault—may in part explain their tendency to theoretically appropriate political struggles without preserving, in the process, their concrete determinations. Yet, at this point, a last specification of my argument is necessary. While Said's and Hall's critiques of Foucault's theorizing are pertinent, Foucault always maintained, from his theoretical standpoint, a peculiar position vis-à-vis political practice. Perhaps nowhere is his understanding of the relation between theory and practice more explicit than in his famous intervention in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution, titled "Is It Useless To Revolt?" and published on *Le Monde* on May 11, 1979 (Foucault [1979] 2000). Here, he states: "Revolts belong to history. But, in a certain way, they escape from it. The impulse by which a single individual, a group, a minority, or an entire people says, 'I will no longer obey' . . . seems to me to be something irreducible" (449). Thus, in light of the replacement of the Shah with the theocratic regime of the Ayatollah Khomeini, Foucault avoids registering his earlier support for the revolution as a misreading of the situation. Rather, since "the man [*sic*] who rebels is finally inexplicable" (449), Foucault uncompromisingly reaffirms that any revolt against power must be listened to. The article ends by making clear that this is Foucault's positioning *as an intellectual*:

I am an intellectual. If I were asked for my conception of what I do, the strategist being the man who says, "What difference does a particular death, a particular cry, a particular revolt make compared to the great general necessity, and, on the other hand, what difference does a general principle make in the particular situation where we are?," well, I would have to say that it is immaterial to me whether the

strategist is a politician, a historian, a revolutionary, a follower of the shah or of the ayatollah; my theoretical ethic is opposite to theirs. It is “antistrategic”: to be respectful when a singularity revolts, intransigent as soon as power violates the universal. (Foucault [1979] 2000, 453)

According to Lorenzo Bernini (2013), this text is a quintessential illustration of Foucault’s practical posture throughout his entire intellectual trajectory.<sup>67</sup> Following Paul Veyne (2010), Bernini reads Foucault as a skeptic, a “dual being”: not a public intellectual of the same kind as Hall or Said, but a *critical* intellectual who struggles to adopt the position of the observer in his intellectual function and immediately abandons it when it comes to engage in the field of political struggle. As Bernini puts it, for Foucault “[the skeptic philosopher] cannot avoid taking part in the political struggles of his or her time yet without ever presuming to hold solutions—hence as a governed, not as an aspiring ruler” (Bernini 2013, 195). This is perhaps another way of naming the difference that Foucault himself formulates between the organic or “universal intellectual” and the “specific intellectual” (Foucault [1977] 1980). The specific intellectual does not aspire to theorize a social totality and to orient a counter-hegemonic political practice, but is concerned with localized struggles and takes part in them from his or her specific location.<sup>68</sup> Foucault’s commentary in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution adds to that distinction the fact that wherever resistance and revolt against power emerges, the specific intellectual listens to it and supports it.<sup>69</sup>

Bernini argues that, by assuming the position of the critical and specific intellectual, Foucault refuses to provide “epistemic guarantees” for the articulation of political practice (Bernini 2013, 198). On the contrary:

there is a clear-cut distinction, in [Foucault], . . . between *praxis* and *theoria*, action and knowledge: two fields of human activity that entertain different relations with truth. It is precisely in the name of such an ontological hiatus that Foucault regards any theoretical attempt to grant truth-value to specific political practices as illegitimate. The intellectual, in his view, is neither a scientist nor a prophet: it is not his role “to tell others what they have to do.” (Bernini 2013, 199)<sup>70</sup>

Thus, Said and Hall are right to point out that Foucault’s work does not offer any consistent explanation for resistance. But this is not *just* a side

effect of his conceptualizations of power. It is a specific choice on his part: a choice of *theoretical practice*. In other words, Foucault not only avoids a conceptualization of ideology, but he also stubbornly refuses to consider his own theorizing as a form of counter-ideological practice. One can agree or disagree with him and with his vision of the specific intellectual as opposed to the organic intellectual. What matters in the context of my discussion is that Massad and Puar appropriate Foucault's theory even as they do not subscribe, at least in practice, to his understanding of theoretical practice and intellectual labor. As their respective polemics with Helem and alQaws illustrate, they certainly do not refrain from deploying abstract conceptualizations of power—of Foucauldian derivation—to *tell others what they have to do*.

This discussion of Foucault and of his appropriation by Puar and Massad suggests that a given theoretical and conceptual apparatus does not *determine* in advance the adoption of a specific theoretical practice. At the same time, theory and theoretical practice cannot be entirely disjoined. Hall expresses this tension during his discussion of Foucault's abandonment of ideology: "I don't much care whether you call it ideology or not. What matters is not the terminology but the conceptualization. . . . I go on using the term 'ideology' because it forces me to continue thinking about that problem" (Hall 1986c, 49). This passage makes clear that Hall's critique of Foucault is not an orthodox polemic about the preservation of Marxist language. But it also suggests that the concepts with which one traffics do condition one's relation to the problem at hand. In the next section, I continue and expand this discussion. On the one hand, I explore approaches to the problems of homonationalism and sexual imperialism that avoid imposing theoretical abstractions over concrete fields of social and political struggles—and they do so by offering a politico-ideological critique of hegemonic formations. Thus, implicitly or explicitly, these approaches confirm that even if theory does not determine theoretical practice, a *tendential* relation does exist between the two. On the other hand, some of the authors discussed in the next section question not so much Puar's and Massad's theoretical apparatuses as their diasporic location in the United States. These critics suggest that, when not acknowledged as such, the diasporic standpoint prevents rather than facilitate the articulation of concrete struggles unfolding on the other side of the transnational divide. Through their critique, I expand the analysis conducted so far, now posing a specific question about *diasporic* theoretical practice.

### *Articulating Transnational Hegemonic Struggles*

In the context of her own critique of Foucault, Gayatri C. Spivak is right to suggest, as Said himself does, that the limits of Foucault's theorizing come into full view especially when the latter is appropriated by some of his readers: "Because of the power of the word 'power,' Foucault admits to using the 'metaphor of the point which progressively irradiates its surroundings.' Such slips become the rule rather than the exception in less careful hands. And that radiating point, animating an effectively heliocentric discourse, fills the empty place of the agent with the historical sun of theory, the Subject of Europe" (Spivak 1988, 274).<sup>71</sup> In this passage, Spivak suggests that Foucault's approach to the problem of power, especially when circulating among some of his readers, reveals the tendency of theory to cannibalize the concrete via abstraction. But it also suggests that this theoretical abstraction of "power" from a concrete field of relations of force be understood as a quintessentially European gesture—especially when European intellectuals set out to theorize about the global South. In her view, the place left vacant by the vanishing of concrete social forces and political subjects operative in the global South is implicitly rearticulated as the place of European theory (and theorists).

When redirected toward *diasporic* intellectuals in Europe and the United States, Spivak's critique acquires a particular meaning. Is this how we shall read Puar and Mikdashi's effort to distance the theory of homonationalism from the politico-ideological practices deployed by pinkwashing activists in Israel-Palestine and elsewhere, to the irritation of Schotten and Maikay? Puar's critique of homonationalism has contributed enormously to the hegemonic struggles that are recomposing the fields of contemporary queer theory and LGBTQ politics in Europe and the United States. Yet how is this related to Puar's refusal—especially in her most recent interventions—to theoretically appropriate queer struggles in the global South while preserving their concrete determinations? How to articulate sexual struggles in the global South with the struggles conducted by queer of color and queer diasporic formations in the global North?

Jason Ritchie partly addresses these questions in his essay, "Pinkwashing, Homonationalism, and Israel-Palestine: The Conceits of Queer Theory and the Politics of the Ordinary" (2014). Ritchie begins his analysis by recalling a typical "culture war" waged *within* the LGBTQ community in New York City in 2011. Upon receiving protests against the

organization of a party by Siege Busters, an anti-occupation collective, not only did the New York LGBT Community Center cancel the party, but its executive director Glenda Testone affirmed that Siege Busters and other such groups would not be welcome anymore at the Center, for their focus is not on LGBT issues (1).<sup>72</sup> Few weeks later, a meeting took place at the Center to address the controversy. Ritchie notes that Sarah Schulman, in *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International* (2012), narrates the meeting “as an almost epic battle between good queers and bad queers for control over queer space in the city” (Ritchie 2014, 2).<sup>73</sup> Unsurprisingly, the meeting reinforced the antagonism between the two positions and the Center even announced, few months later, “a moratorium . . . on renting space to groups that organize around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” allegedly (and ironically) “to ensure that all individuals in [the] community feel welcome to come through [the Center’s] doors” (LGBT Community Center, quoted in Ritchie 2014, 2). Only two years later was the ban lifted, to the approval of Schulman and the indignation of Michael Lucas, the man who had initiated the protest against Siege Busters’ party in the first place. Lucas began campaigning for privates to stop donating and for the city of New York to stop funding the Center (Ritchie 2014, 3).

According to Ritchie, this and other such controversies make clear that “for pinkwashers and pinkwatchers alike, queerness in Israel-Palestine has become a powerful symbol of something bigger than—and far removed from—the actual space of Israel-Palestine” (Ritchie 2014, 3). Indeed, even as he sympathizes with queer political formations militating against the Israeli occupation, and even as he praises the emergence of queer of color critiques of homonormativity and homonationalism that struggle to rearticulate sexual politics to a broader horizon of social and economic justice, Ritchie warns:

Beneath [the] collection of seemingly contradictory interests [involved in the incident at the Center] . . . lies a common theme. The debate over pinkwashing among New York City queers had less to do with the realities of queerness in Israel/Palestine—or even the ideological uses of it by the Israeli government—and more to do with the utility of *pinkwashing* for making all kinds of claims to queer space in the neoliberal city. (Ritchie 2014, 4)

Ritchie’s major concern, therefore, is what he perceives as a disarticulation

between, on the one hand, the struggles for hegemony conducted within LGBTQ formations in the global North and, on the other hand, the struggles in the global South that are often mobilized in the context of the former. Moreover, drawing a connection between the conflict at the Center and Puar and Mikdashi's critique of pinkwashing activism, he takes a step further and argues that the disconnection between queer struggles in the United States and Israel-Palestine coincides with a disconnection between the theory of homonationalism and the struggles of Palestinian queers. In his view, "homonationalism's critics have removed the theory from the concrete socio-historical context it so lucidly described and released it into the ether of empty signifiers that can take on ideological value for any purpose, from a fight over who *belongs* in New York City's LGBT Community Center to an effort by two American academics [Puar and Mikdashi] to dismiss anti-homonationalism queer activists for engaging in homonationalism" (Ritchie 2014, 5). Hence, his proposal to rearticulate the theory to a concrete field of forces via an ethnographic focus on the daily experiences of Palestinian queers under Israeli occupation: "I argue that queer inquiry—especially those lines of inquiry informed by ethnic and cultural studies paradigms—might learn something from ethnography's stubborn insistence on the primacy of the quotidian" (7).<sup>74</sup> In this spirit, the rest of his essay is devoted to tracking the operations of the "checkpoint" in Israel-Palestine as a central mechanism to control the mobility of Palestinians, including Palestinian queers.

Ritchie's critique is pertinent and his deployment of ethnography serves indeed to mitigate some of the totalizing abstractions that are to be found in Puar's and Massad's respective analyses. However, this move is not followed by an alternative attempt of theoretical abstraction that—unlike the theories he criticizes—must preserve the concrete determinations of the struggles it appropriates. This does not mean that Ritchie does not theorize, or that he deploys ethnography as a mere reproducer of the empirically-given *against* theory. On the contrary, his discussion of the checkpoint—the core of his analysis—proceeds in three steps. First, he acknowledges its centrality to the exercise of Israeli sovereignty: "As part of a gradual process that began at the conclusion of the Six-Day War in 1967, the state developed a labyrinthine system of checkpoints that has given it almost complete control over the mobility of Palestinian bodies, including the ability to impose both external 'closures' on the West Bank and Gaza . . . and internal closures (and curfews) that further limit the mobility of Palestinians

to specific cities, villages, and other defined areas” (Ritchie 2014, 7-8). Second, even as he warns against abstracting the checkpoint from its “trenchant *physicality*,” he adopts it “as a *metaphor* for understanding how Israeli sovereignty penetrates even the most seemingly intimate spaces of everyday life” (8). Thus, finally, he analyzes how this checkpoint-as-metaphor regulates the mobility of Palestinian queers through different spaces: cyberspace (dating websites), cruising spaces (that is, spaces of “public” intimacy), the intimate space of love relationships, and the public space of gay bars and clubs (9-14). As Hall would put it, Ritchie struggles to produce the checkpoint as a “concrete-in-thought” that shall enable him to theoretically appropriate the experiences of Palestinian queers without abstracting them from the material conditions of their emergence.

However, this analysis addresses only in part the problematic profiled by Ritchie’s own essay. While it mitigates the totalizing abstractions that often circulate within debates about homonationalism and sexual imperialism, and even as it recenters the discussion about pinkwashing in Israel-Palestine around the experiences of Palestinian queers and away from the conflicting interests of heterogeneous LGBTQ formations in the United States, it does not manage to suggest, in turn, how to read the transnational articulations between these different struggles. In order to do so, a further attempt of abstraction is required that connects homonationalism, sexual imperialism, the critiques of both and the ideological function that such critiques perform in the global North, and the struggles against heteropatriarchy and imperialism (including sexual imperialism) conducted by LGBTQ and feminist formations in the global South.

This problem is addressed by María do Mar Castro Varela and Nikita Dhawan in their essay, “Normative Dilemmas and the Hegemony of Counter-Hegemony” (2011). Castro Varela and Dhawan acknowledge that “the politics of homonormativity exercises an influence beyond Euro-American borders and despite its Eurocentrism, it claims transnational legitimacy” (110). But they warn: “However, . . . it is dangerous to primarily focus on queer imperialism while ignoring the heterosexist violence experienced by queers in the global South” (110). Thus, contrary to Massad, according to whom homophobia in the Arab world is a direct effect of Western imperialism and of the Gay International, Castro Varela and Dhawan posit as the starting point of their analysis a relation of connection *and* discontinuity between the two; we could say, a relation of relative autonomy and articulation. While they make clear that “[t]he colonial continuity of the politics of migration in

the European context or the experiences of racism and discrimination that are part and parcel of the everyday life of queer migrants are urgent issues that need to be scandalized” (111 n27), and even as they register that “in most postcolonial contexts, the criminalization of homosexuality was introduced during colonialism” (110),<sup>75</sup> they nonetheless insist, echoing Ritchie: “we take seriously the politics of location and the conflict of interests between the struggles in the global North and the global South” (111 n27). In light of this perspective, they offer a rather damning account of queer of color and queer diasporic theoretical formations:

The recent turn within Euro-American queer theory and politics increasingly focuses on diasporic queers of colour on the one hand as “targets” of homonationalism (Puar 2007) and on the other hand as agents of utopian futurity and queer world-making (Muñoz 2009). The representation of diasporic queers of colour as simply “victims” of queer imperialism masks their location on the privileged side of transnationality. . . . There is a certain impulse in Euro-American queer studies and politics to universalize their interests and critique, so that even as “U.S. sexual exceptionalism” . . . is challenged, “U.S. academic exceptionalism” is consolidated—an interesting “repetition-in-rupture.” Moreover . . . [t]here is a certain monopolization of agency by those who, with First World citizenships and hard currency, can afford to reject “pragmatic” politics in favour of more “radical” interventions in the face of queer imperialism. (Castro Varela and Dhawan 2011, 111)<sup>76</sup>

Different aspects are being criticized in this passage that can be schematically summarized as follows: a) what Castro Varela and Dhawan seem to consider as a “fetishization” of the queer of color subject—as victim—in contemporary queer debates; b) a disavowal, in the process, of the “privileged location” of the queer of color diasporic subject vis-à-vis the transnational divide, even as that subject is the target of multiple forms of oppression and exploitation in Western social formations; c) a more general hegemonization of Western social formations *and* forms of knowledge in contemporary queer debates, even when the latter set out to address precisely questions of Western hegemony; d) too quick a rejection of “pragmatic” politics in favor of intellectual forms of radicalism. Their primary concern is, needless to say, LGBTQ struggles in the global South: “In most countries of the global South, queer activists and theorists are struggling for constitutional

recognition of sexual rights, including same-sex marriage, as an important aspect of sexual justice, even as these are rejected in the global North as a politics of appeasement” (Castro Varela and Dhawan 2011, 112).<sup>77</sup>

Castro Varela and Dhawan’s critique, like Ritchie’s, is provoking and pertinent. The problem they raise—that “[a]nti-racist politics in the global North are related to but are not continuous with the processes of decolonization in the global South” (Castro Varela and Dhawan 2011, 112)—is a necessary starting point to develop theories and theoretical practices able to account for the transnational articulations between homonationalism, sexual imperialism, and homophobia. However, both Ritchie and Castro Varela and Dhawan fail to read the struggle around the color line in contemporary queer debates in Europe and the United States as a source of recomposition—that is, as a key terrain of politico-ideological struggle, not simply a mark of Western privilege. It is against the background of this partial misreading that Castro Varela and Dhawan end up emphasizing the *discontinuities*, rather than the *relations*, between queer struggles emerging on the two sides of the transnational divide. In so doing, their analysis remains just one step removed from actually offering an account of the transnational articulations between those struggles.<sup>78</sup>

Such an account is to be found, instead, in Rahul Rao’s work. Rao intervenes in these debates primarily by focusing on a key contemporary site of articulation of sexual imperialism: the local and international struggles around the infamous Anti-Homosexuality Act passed by the Parliament of Uganda in December 2013, signed into law by President Yoweri Museveni on February 24, 2014, and later ruled invalid on procedural grounds by the Constitutional Court of Uganda. Not surprisingly, this piece of homophobic legislation—which originally prescribed death penalty for those engaging in same-sex practices, later replaced with life imprisonment—circulated among Western critics as an example of quintessentially “African” homophobia. In the remainder of this section, I recover Rao’s earlier critique of Massad’s work on the Gay International as well as his most recent analyses of the Ugandan case. By drawing the two together, I suggest that Rao offers an approach to homonationalism and sexual imperialism which does not obscure the transnational articulations between queer struggles in the global North and in the South. As I shall argue, Rao’s approach foregrounds such articulations by paying distinct attention to the balance of forces among the different subjects involved: the postcolonial state, international financial institutions, institutions of the

civil society (such as churches) operating both locally and transnationally, and LGBTQ formations in the global North and the global South.

In “Queer in the Time of Terror” (2011),<sup>79</sup> Rao questions Massad’s analysis of the Gay International on different grounds. First, like Dhawan, he states that queer critical theory must “find a language in which to criticise the supremacism that lurks within the global politics of LGBT solidarity without downplaying or ignoring the oppressiveness of homophobia” (44). In Rao’s view, Massad’s analysis is a quintessential example of a failure to do so. Second, Rao reiterates a critique of Massad’s denial of Arabs’ agency (45-46). But the third and most interesting way in which he addresses Massad’s analysis is by questioning the very abstraction of a monolithic Gay International: “Massad tars all Western activism with the same brush. . . . In contrast, this essay attempts to disaggregate the Gay International, bringing to light distinct manifestations of a gay rescue narrative on both the political right and left, produced by different actors with different sorts of motivations” (45).<sup>80</sup> Thus, with a focus on Britain and the United States, Rao distinguishes between the ideological and political practices articulated by right-wing formations such as the Log Cabin Republicans (LCR) in the United States and by traditionally left-wing activists such as Peter Tatchell and Outrage! in Britain. As I discussed in the previous chapter, LCR is a gay group close to the U.S. Republican Party. Tatchell, instead, had taken part in the British Gay Liberation Front in the 1970s, was a member of Labour in the 1980s, and joined the Green Party in 2004. His group Outrage! is in part an offspring of this political trajectory and advocates direct action and civil disobedience.<sup>81</sup>

About LCR, Rao argues that “it is the very incompleteness of their inclusion within the US nation and, more specifically the Republican Party, which furnishes a powerful incentive for collusion between homosexuality and nationalism” (Rao 2011, 51). In other words, relying on Puar’s analysis of homonationalism, Rao suggests that the interests of such right-wing formations in the “saving” of queers in the global South get articulated first and foremost in the course of a hegemonic struggle for legitimate space within the nation-state and the party.<sup>82</sup> When looking at the traditionally left side of the political spectrum, instead, Rao suggests that LGBTQ formations find in the sexual politics of the global South primarily a means to rearticulate their very *raison d’être*. He points out that Tatchell “operates from a more gay-friendly jurisdiction in which LGBT citizens have won a number of significant victories, particularly since the election of a Labour

government in 1997” (53). This context, coupled with Tatchell’s own political vision, allows him to affirm that his international campaigning is driven by the “very simple” view that “[h]uman rights are universal and indivisible, whether in Iran, Britain or the United States” (Tatchell, quoted in Rao 2011, 52). However, Rao argues that this commitment to human rights in the global South is not as transparent as Tatchell suggests. Rather, it helps him articulate an oppositional standpoint on sexual politics which has partially lost its ground in the British context. According to this analysis, while LCR’s missionary attitude is actually motivated by their struggle for inclusion in the United States, the depoliticizing effect of inclusion in Britain is what informs Tatchell’s commitment to human rights struggles abroad. Thus, Rao highlights that heterogeneous LGBTQ formations in the global North similarly adopt a missionary position vis-à-vis the global South but are driven to do so by different interests.<sup>83</sup>

This disaggregation of the Gay International is not meant to downplay its participation in homonationalism and sexual imperialism. In “The Locations of Homophobia” (2014), a later essay in which Rao exposes the political *and* theoretical limitations of “locating” homophobia culturally and geographically, he suggests that Tatchell’s firm stance on human rights worldwide goes hand-in-hand with his willful indifference to the detrimental effects of his political practices on LGBTQ struggles in the global South:

In the run-up to the 2011 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Perth, Tatchell called on British Prime Minister David Cameron to apologise for Britain’s imposition of the sodomy law on its colonies. Under pressure from activists, Cameron responded with an ill-advised comment suggesting that British aid would be linked to respect for LGBT rights in recipient countries. (Rao 2014, 177)

Not only did Cameron’s suggestion—incited by Tatchell—provoke hostile reactions on the part of different African leaders, but perhaps more importantly, “a number of African activists publically dissociated themselves from this articulation of ‘gay conditionality,’ warning that the refusal of aid on sexual rights grounds would result in the scapegoating of queers in recipient countries potentially provoking a backlash against them, besides reinforcing perceptions of the ‘westernness’ of homosexuality and further entrenching imperial relationships between donor and recipient

countries” (Rao 2014, 178). While this statement by African activists did not explicitly mention Tatchell, an earlier statement did so and addressed him as follows: “Stay out of African LGBTI issues. You have proven that you have no respect for conveying the truth with regards to Africa or consulting African LGBTI leaders before carrying out campaigns that have severe consequences in our countries. . . . This is neo-colonialism and it has no place in our struggle or in Africa” (Aken’Ova *et al.* 2007).<sup>84</sup> If the analysis ended here, it would confirm Massad’s argument that the Gay International is centrally responsible for the articulation of homophobia in the Arab world and the global South at large. Rao, instead, locates the maneuvers of particular segments of the Gay International within a broader field of transnational struggles, paying attention to the balance of force between the different subjects involved.

Rao begins by observing that the attempts by Western governments, LGBT formations, and international organizations to “locate” homophobia in the global South matches the argument often formulated by Southern elites themselves according to which homosexuality, indeed, is a Western import (Rao 2014, 174). Both sides of this debate, in turn, use to be countered by progressive critics with the rejoinder that actually homophobia, rather than homosexuality, is a Western import. One variant of the rejoinder points out that “most postcolonial states with homophobic laws inherited them from their Western colonial predecessors. In this regard, the legacy of British colonialism has become a particular focus of attention” (175).<sup>85</sup> While this variant looks at the colonial past, another variant of the same argument focuses on the *present* circulations of homophobic ideology. This critique was mobilized, for instance, in the debates over the criminalization of homosexuality in Uganda: “The claim that homophobia is an import from the West has . . . been prominent in discussion of Uganda’s [Anti-Homosexuality Act], which has widely been attributed to the malign influence of US Christian evangelical missionaries in Africa” (178). Indeed, according to various accounts, the Anti-Homosexuality Bill was conceived in the wake of a ‘Seminar on Exposing the Homosexual Agenda,’ held in Kampala in March 2009 and attended by U.S. homophobic evangelicals Scott Lively, Don Schmierer, and Caleb Brundidge.<sup>86</sup> By focusing either on homophobia as a colonial legacy or on the involvement of Western actors in its contemporary circulations, progressive critics aim to resist *both* Western attempts to “locate” homophobia in the global South *and* Southern attempts to construct homosexuality as a culturally inauthentic Western import.

However, according to Rao, while all of this is true and important to register—the British empire *did export* anti-sodomy laws to its colonies and U.S. evangelicals *do participate* in the contemporary enforcement of oppressive sexual politics in the global South—both rejoinders may be trivial, or at least insufficient to understand contemporary articulations of homophobia in Uganda and elsewhere in the South. On the one hand, the emphasis on colonial anti-sodomy laws “fails to account for the embrace and resignification of these laws by postcolonial elites, and the persistence or emergence of homophobia in many postcolonial societies decades after the end of colonialism” (Rao 2014, 177). On the other hand, the focus on the involvement of U.S. religious individuals and movements in the articulation of state homophobia in contemporary Uganda tends to by-pass a fundamental question: “what has prepared Ugandan audiences to be receptive to the gospel of homophobia, whether imported or indigenous?” (181) In other words, the rejoinders of Western involvement past and present in the production of homophobia either in Uganda or elsewhere in the global South may be more or less successfully mobilized by critics in the global North in order to counter the imperialist tendencies of, among others, LGBTQ formations such as Tatchell’s Outrage! However, those rejoinders alone are of little help when it comes to understand how homophobia in fact materializes in the South.

Rao suggests that one way of addressing this question, in the particular context of Uganda, is by offering a conjunctural analysis of the role played by local elites in the current articulation of homophobia. First, he suggests that the Ugandan Anglican clergy may have harnessed existing conflicts over homosexuality within the international Anglican Communion in order to size, for the first time, a significant space of authority within it. As he observes, it was not until the thirteen Lambeth Conference in 1998—the assembly of the Communion taking place every ten years—that the issue of homosexuality became a central concern for the Church of Uganda (Rao 2014, 191). At the conference, where homosexuality was hotly debated, African clergies played a pivotal role in cementing a conservative bloc that managed to have a resolution against homosexuality passed. Thus, the Ugandan clergy had specific interests in actively circulating homophobic ideologies at this moment of struggle within the Communion, for it allowed them to take space within a historically imperialist institution (192-193).<sup>87</sup> Second, shifting the attention from the religious to the political elite, Rao observes that “one . . . explanation for contemporary homophobia suggests

that it serves the political interests of the ruling elite by diverting the attention of local and international publics from an increasingly dismal record of governance” (194). Thus, while the Anglican clergy may have exploited homophobia to seize space within the international Communion, the Ugandan political elite may have deployed it to conceal or even to preserve a base of consent to its political maneuvers.

However, even as these explanations begin to account for the local and transnational struggles for hegemony presiding over the concrete emergence of state homophobia, according to Rao they are still insufficient. As he puts it in a later essay, titled “Global Homocapitalism” (2015), “even [these] accounts that weight African agency more heavily . . . have neglected to explain subaltern receptiveness to these discourses” (45). Thus, in this essay, he follows the lead of Hall *et al.*’s analysis in *Policing the Crisis* (1978) and, reading the contemporary formation of homophobia in Uganda as a moral panic, he turns “from the production of homophobic discourse . . . to what we might think of as the ‘consumption’ side of this problem” (Rao 2015, 46). In order to do so, he emphasizes the role played by neoliberal structural adjustments—advocated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and implemented in Uganda through the 1980s and 1990s—in preparing the terrain for the *popular* reception of homophobic ideology.

According to Rao, next to the Anglican church, a fundamental actor mediating the circulation of homophobia in contemporary Uganda is the constellation of Pentecostal-charismatic churches. The emergence and spread of the latter, in turn, should be understood within a context marked by the sequence of war and neoliberalization. On the one hand, the guerrilla war waged between 1981 and 1986 by the National Resistance Movement (NRM) led by Yoweri Museveni—the current President of Uganda, who signed the Anti-Homosexuality Act into law in 2014—managed to end a series of dictatorships and authoritarian governments. According to Rao, in the wake of the war, “Pentecostalism’s promise of temporal rupture and renewal through ‘born again’ Christianity provided the perfect spiritual complement to the victorious NRM’s mission of reconstruction from 1986 onwards” (Rao 2015, 45). In this respect, Pentecostal churches were also aided by a lack of association with previous ruling blocs (contrary to the Anglican and Catholic churches). On the other hand, the NRM inherited a country highly indebted. Thus, abandoning its previous Marxist positions, it proceeded to implement the structural adjustment programs advocated

by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This politico-economic context favored a further expansion of the Pentecostal churches:

As structural adjustments gathered pace, the new Pentecostal churches moved into the space vacated by the shrinking state, becoming major providers of social services such as education and health. By the early 2000s, the burgeoning HIV/AIDS epidemic offered the perfect pretext for their interventions in the public sphere with a conservative, moralizing and virulently homophobic discourse. (Rao 2015, 46)

This war of position, conducted by the Pentecostal churches vis-à-vis a state receding from the provision of public services, was not just *made possible* by neoliberalization. As Rao remarks, the World Bank granted explicit support to faith-based organizations as key partners in the project of social and economic “development” (Rao 2015, 46). Materially, Pentecostal churches as well as heteropatriarchal family structures helped absorbing the precarizing effects of structural adjustments. Ideologically, such religious formations strengthen the links between family, morality, and material wellbeing, thus crucially mediating the rise of popular homophobia in times (and places) of economic insecurity (47).

In light of this analysis, Rao questions the World Bank’s recent stances against homophobia in the global South. In February 2014, for instance, the Bank decided to delay a loan of 90 million U.S. dollars to Uganda in response to Museveni’s signing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act.<sup>88</sup> A debate ensued—within and outside LGBTQ formations—about the beneficial or detrimental effects of the Bank’s decision. But Rao comments: “Missing in this curious debate about whether the Bank should concern itself with LGBT rights was a recognition of the degree to which it was *already* implicated in their disavowal” (Rao 2015, 47). In other words, the stance against homophobia taken both by the Bank and by powerful donors ideologically “allow[s] them to masquerade as agents of benevolence and to shore up the hegemony of ‘development’ and neoliberal capitalism as civilizing influences” (47). Thus, building on the debates on homonormativity and homonationalism, Rao terms this articulation of LGBT rights to the transnational consolidation of neoliberal hegemony, “global homocapitalism.” The latter, as an ideological formation, relies “on a view of homophobia as ‘merely cultural’” (48),<sup>89</sup> making it possible not only to locate homophobia as an essential element of specific “cultures,”

but also to continue promoting a liberal politics of recognition even as those promoting it are centrally implicated in the material consolidation of homophobia in the first place.

Rao's key conclusion, in "The Locations of Homophobia" (2014), is that rather than trying to "locate" homophobia we should focus on its "dispersion." He writes: "The affects that travel under the sign of 'homophobia' in Uganda may well feature locally particular idioms . . . but their structural relations with material precarity bear a striking resemblance to those visible in the West. In this crucial respect at least, homophobia in Uganda is not significantly different from homophobia in the West" (196). However, this observation differs from Tatchell's abstract invocation of indivisible and universal human rights, which in times of homonationalism and sexual imperialism regularly ends up locating homophobia in the global South. Rao's observation proceeds, on the contrary, from his concrete and conjunctural analyses. Upon mentioning the accounts that read homophobia in Uganda as a moral panic, he remarks:

Such accounts take us further in understanding the resonance that homophobic discourses have with Ugandan audiences today. But notice what has happened to the location of homophobia in such arguments. . . . [T]he kinds of explanations offered for homophobia in Uganda work equally well for the West. (Rao 2014, 195)<sup>90</sup>

As this passage suggests, it is theoretical practice itself that, according to Rao, points at a dispersion of homophobia. Because the same theoretical practices allow us to understand the concrete emergence of homophobia in the global North and in the global South, any attempt to "locate" homophobia loses theoretical and political significance. Rao makes this point with reference to the concept of moral panic, hence explicitly connecting his analysis to the work of Hall in the 1980s, among others. But we could make the same point by situating Rao's analysis in relation to contemporary queer of color and queer diasporic critique. Similarly to Ferguson's (2004) and Reddy's (2011) accounts of the heteropatriarchy affecting queer of color and queer diasporic formations in the United States, Rao's analysis suggests that homophobia in Uganda materializes through the contradictions between state and capital. I argued at the beginning of this chapter that, for Reddy, the U.S. state upholds an ideology of sexual freedom—to the point of making space for the gay Pakistani asylum seeker

within the legal archive—even as it reinforces diasporic heteropatriarchy through migration management, mediating the formation of a gendered and racialized labor force. For Rao, international financial institutions such as the World Bank take stances against homophobia even as they help producing the terrain on which both state and popular homophobias thrive. In Uganda as well as the United States, the emergence of homophobia can be tracked through materialist analyses that acknowledge the relative autonomy of politics and ideology. Such analyses, in turn, highlight the dispersion of homophobia across the transnational divide as an object of both theoretical inquiry and political practice.

Following Rao's call to disperse homophobia, in the next section I shift the attention from the global South to the European South, and more specifically to the Italian context. Here, I focus on the contemporary war on "gender ideology" unleashed in Italy by the Vatican, the local far-right, and Catholic conservative movements. Anti-gender mobilizations are taking place today all over Europe and their primary targets are feminist and queer theories, lobbying organizations, equality legislation, and sexual education initiatives. The anti-gender front claims to be resisting an ideological colonization proceeding from the United States and from European and international institutions. On the one hand, by turning to Europe, I aim to undo the divide between Western sexual freedom and Third World homophobia that structures the politics and ideologies of homonationalism and sexual imperialism. On the other hand, I pay particular attention to the antagonisms activated among queer critics about *how* to understand and to resist the conservative campaign. Through this focus, I expand and conclude my reflections on theoretical practice.

*Gender Panic: The War on "Gender Ideology"  
at the Periphery of Europe*

On December 21, 2012, during his Christmas address to the Roman curia, former Pope Benedict XVI recalled Simone de Beauvoir's famous assertion that "one is not born, but rather becomes, woman" (Beauvoir [1949] 2011, 330). Hence he commented: "These words lay the foundation for what is put forward today under the term 'gender' as a new philosophy of sexuality. According to this philosophy, sex is no longer a given element of nature, that man has to accept and personally make sense of: it is a social role that

we choose for ourselves, while in the past it was chosen for us by society. The profound falsehood of this theory and of the anthropological revolution contained within it is obvious” (Pope Benedict XVI 2012). As I will argue, this was not the first time that the Vatican and the Pope became concerned with feminist and queer critiques of the heteropatriarchal naturalization of gender. But this speech formally initiated a widespread counter-offensive against what has since been termed “gender theory” or “gender ideology” (Kuhar and Paternotte 2017). This conservative campaign draws together a number of heterogeneous elements—feminist and queer theories, equality legislation, and sexual education initiatives in schools, among others—and constructs them, in Pope Francis’ (2015) words, as a project of “ideological colonization.” The latter, in turn, is attributed to the penetration of feminist and “homosexualist” lobbies into European supranational institutions and international political bodies, such as the United Nations (Prearo and De Guerre 2017). The 2012 speech by Pope Benedict XVI for the first time brought this conspiracy theory out of the political and intellectual circles close to the Vatican and projected it into the public space. It did so at a particular moment, when a law bill was being discussed in France that would extend the institution of marriage to same-sex couples: the so-called *marriage pour tous* (marriage for all), passed by the French Parliament in April 2013. The Vatican’s attack on “gender” was central to the emergence of the French movement *Manif pour Tous* (Demonstration for All) opposing the law (Garbagnoli 2014, 258). From that moment on, the war on “gender ideology” has been branching out quickly, especially across Southern and Eastern Europe.

The anti-gender front began to take shape in Italy in the Summer 2013, in order to contest a law bill on homophobic and transphobic violence (the so-called Scalfarotto Bill). Its emergence was mediated by the French experience, as illustrated, for instance, by the formation of the group *Manif pour Tous – Italia* (Garbagnoli 2014, 258). Since then, the movement has been mobilizing fervently. Unlike its French counterpart, which was ultimately unable to block the legalization of same-sex marriage, the Italian anti-gender front has already obtained major successes. The Scalfarotto Bill was approved by one of the two chambers of the Italian Parliament but never made it to the other. A program of sexual education in public schools designed by UNAR (the national office against racial discrimination) was struck down by the Ministry of Education, University and Research of Matteo Renzi’s government in 2014. Finally, a law bill on LGBT civil

unions proposed by the same government (the so-called Cirinnà Bill) became law in 2016, but only after restrictive revisions introduced under the pressure of anti-gender mobilizations and Pope Francis himself (Bernini 2016, 369).<sup>91</sup> Yet, although these concrete differences between the French and the Italian case do matter, they should not be overstated. Whether successful or not in its attempts to halt specific legislative processes, the war on “gender ideology” has come to redefine the very terrain of sexual politics in contemporary Europe.

This shifting of the political terrain stands in a contradictory relation to the debates on homonationalism and sexual imperialism discussed in this chapter. On the one hand, the attack on “gender ideology” in Europe seems to controvert one of the unspoken premises informing such debates: that is, the assumption that a certain degree of sexual progress had been achieved once and for all across the global North, or at least that the path in that direction had been irreversibly taken. In the introduction to their forthcoming volume *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe: Mobilizing Against Equality* (2017), Roman Kuhar and David Paternotte write:

Scholars, observers and actors alike were generally convinced that Europe was on an unstoppable way toward “full” gender equality and sexual citizenship. They assumed that such forms of opposition [as the anti-gender mobilizations] were largely foreign to the European experience or could only subsist as remains of the past and primarily in Eastern Europe or in (Catholic) countries such as Italy or Ireland. Largely successful demonstrations . . . such as the French *Manif pour Tous* came therefore as a surprise and force them to amend such a grand narrative. (Kuhar and Paternotte 2017)

This passage suggests that “progress” is a rather volatile object for both theory and political practice. Even as Kuhar and Paternotte make no reference to queer critiques of homonationalism and sexual imperialism, their analysis can be appropriated as a reminder that such critiques may unwittingly participate in contemporary efforts to “locate” progress in the global North and homophobia in the global South, to the extent that they unilaterally insist on the rearticulation of sexual progress to Western nationalism and imperialism.

Yet, on the other hand, it is undeniable that the war on “gender ideology” has been spreading *unevenly* across Europe. The language

of “ideological colonization” has found a particularly fertile terrain in Southern and Eastern European peripheries. To different degrees and in different ways, the latter maintain with “Europe” a relation of political and economic dependency both historically and in the context of the current politico-economic crisis, during which the peripheries of the continent have been the primary target of austerity measures designed at the supranational level.<sup>92</sup> Thus, as Weronika Grzebalska observes in the context of Poland, an “anti-neocolonial, Eurosceptic rhetoric . . . played out loudly throughout the recent anti-gender mobilisation. In statements and discussions that accompanied the campaign, the discursive figure of the EU as a cultural coloniser, corrupting innocent Polish children and suppressing the Polish national culture, was used ubiquitously” (Grzebalska 2015, 92). Sara Garbagnoli projects this analysis on the Italian context. In her view, the success of the conservative campaign in Italy is also due to its capitalizing on the current politico-economic crisis, “creating a moral panic that responds to a number of anxieties produced during a period of austerity” (Garbagnoli 2017). As I have been arguing throughout this dissertation, in times of crisis moral panics thrive. According to this reading, the current war on “gender ideology” ideologically mediates the European politico-economic crisis by rearticulating internal divides already existing between Europe and its own peripheries.

Therefore, bringing “gender ideology” into contemporary debates on homonationalism and sexual imperialism may *both* erode the divide between Western sexual freedom and Third World homophobia *and* reposition it, at the same time, within Europe itself. Shall we consider the current war on “gender ideology” in Europe to entirely undo the divide between global North and global South, which informs the politics and ideologies of homonationalism and sexual imperialism? Or shall we privilege the success achieved by the conservative campaign in the Southern and Eastern peripheries of the continent, hence rearticulating Europe itself as a terrain of struggle *internally* crossed by forms of sexual imperialism? Rather than answering these questions and solving the contradiction—that is, rather than “locating” homophobia in the European periphery and proceeding to position the latter, in turn, either in Europe or as its more ambiguous “internal other”—in the remainder of this section I focus on the antagonisms among queer critics themselves about *how* to read the conservative campaign. Paying attention to the problem of theoretical practice, I resist locating either homophobia or the European periphery.

A key approach to the war on “gender ideology” in Italy has been a reconstruction of its history. Garbagnoli was the first one to introduce this analysis in the Italian context, in an essay titled “L’ideologia del genere’: l’irresistibile ascesa di un’invenzione retorica vaticana contro la denaturalizzazione dell’ordine sessuale” (“Gender Ideology”: The Irresistible Rise of a Vatican Rhetorical Invention Against the Denaturalization of the Sexual Order) (2014).<sup>93</sup> In this piece, Garbagnoli traces the emergence of the rhetorical device “gender ideology” (sometimes referred to as “gender theory”) back to the International Conference on Population and Development organized by the UN in Cairo in 1994, and the World Conference on Women organized in Beijing the next year. In the wake of the two conferences, the Vatican became concerned with the appearance of “gender” in the language of international politics. An intense work of elaboration began which led to the publication, in 2003, of *Lexicon: Ambiguous and Debatable Terms Regarding Family Life and Ethical Questions* (Pontifical Council for the Family [2003] 2006). In this text, and especially in the long introduction by French Catholic priest and psychoanalyst Tony Anatrella, “gender theory” is presented as an “opinion,” a “disembodied” theory informed by a radical individualism, an ideology following in the footsteps of Marxism but more dangerous than the latter because of its promise of liberation, a theory elaborated by “intransigent feminists” who put forward “childish” claims, and a “negationism of the sexes” that the people will have to raise up against. Garbagnoli comments:

*Et la voilà* the mysterious “theory”: a blob of slogans that make no theoretical sense and of sexist and homophobic prejudices that have nothing to do with the research produced within the field of gender studies. (Garbagnoli 2014, 255)

By terming “gender theory” or “gender ideology” a blob, Garbagnoli does not simply remark the theoretical inconsistencies internal to the Vatican’s discourse. More importantly, she points at the way in which disparate elements converge in it and come to form an apparently seamless whole. On the one hand, she signals that the Vatican “draws together agents and groups that are neither homogeneous nor concordant” (Garbagnoli 2014, 257). Among these are the academic field of gender studies, the politics of gender mainstreaming, and different forms of equality legislation. On the other hand, focusing on the specific attack on the field of gender studies,

Garbagnoli emphasizes that not only does the Vatican tactically preserve the English word “gender” despite the existence of its Italian translation (*genere*), hence framing the field as “an offshoot of U.S. imperialism” (257), but it also insists on referring to “gender theory” in the singular, obscuring the differences and antagonisms among heterogeneous feminist and queer analyses. Thus, in her view, the rhetorical device “gender ideology” performs first and foremost a work of condensation, of *both* heterogeneous social forces *and* heterogeneous forms of critical knowledge.

This articulation of “gender ideology” appeared in the *Lexicon* in 2003, but its circulation during the following years was restricted to political and intellectual milieus close to the Vatican. As I mentioned earlier, only in 2012-13 was the formula first deployed to articulate a conservative political front in the public space, in the context of the French debate over same-sex marriage. Hence in the Summer 2013, through the mediation of the French experience, “gender ideology” came to dominate the Italian debate on the Scalfarotto Bill on homophobic and transphobic violence. In her early essay, Garbagnoli registers some of these political materializations of the Vatican’s discourse on “gender,” yet her primary focus is on the history of the discourse itself. Instead, a significant work on the field of social and political forces composing the Italian anti-gender front has been carried out, among others, by Yàdad De Guerre and Massimo Prearo.<sup>94</sup> In a recent piece co-written by the two, Prearo and De Guerre (2016) reconstruct the trajectory that produced the very architecture of the conservative bloc. On the one hand, they observe: “The emergence of this broad mobilization is due to the long and synergetic work carried out by fundamentalist Catholic groups, traditionalist groups, and fringes of the Italian far-right, with the support of Vatican elites and segments of the Catholic world.” Yet, on the other hand, they emphasize that the construction of such a bloc was crossed by internal struggles for power as well as by the metamorphosis of already existing formations through their participation in the anti-gender campaign.

First and foremost, even though anti-gender protests in Italy, as in France, have been primarily focusing on the matter of LGBT civil rights, Prearo and De Guerre (2016) foreground the presence of strong anti-abortion formations within the movement from its inception. As they point out, the Italian pro-life movement organized its first Marcia Nazionale per la Vita (National March for Life) in 2011, importing the model of the March for Life organized for the first time in Washington in 1974. While this experiment was by and large a failure, the second edition of the

march in 2012 was more successful, also due to the support of segments of the political class. Prearo and De Guerre stress that from the second march more radicalized pro-life formations emerged that were going to play a key role in the anti-gender front.<sup>95</sup> The latter began to take shape in the Summer 2013. Parallel to the mobilizations against the Scalfarotto Bill and the Cirinnà Bill modeled on the French movement against same-sex marriage, pro-life and traditionalist groups started to organize public conferences on “gender.” The first two conferences took place in Verona and in partial conflict with one another. One was organized by the pro-life formations connected to the National March for Life and was supported by mayor Flavio Tosi, a member of the far-right party Lega Nord (Northern League). The other, instead, was organized by the fundamentalist Catholic group Christus Rex and the neo-fascist party Forza Nuova (New Force), in polemic with mayor Tosi. The anti-gender mobilizations remained dispersed and even fractured until 2014, when yet another conference was organized in Verona—again with the support of the Municipality—by a new pro-life association called Vita è (Life is). According to Prearo and De Guerre, it was at this conference that the constellation of pro-life movements, fundamentalist Catholic groups, and far-right formations cohered into an anti-gender front. The latter provided itself with clear strategies and coordination, inaugurating a season of public conferences and mobilizations during which the war on “gender ideology” reached its peaks of homophobia and transphobia. In this context, Prearo and De Guerre speak of “the becoming anti-gender of pro-life groups.” And it was indeed a *process*, traversed by conflicts over power and space.

Prearo and De Guerre’s reconstruction is key to a substantial understanding of the formation of the anti-gender bloc in Italy. First, it makes visible segments of it that would otherwise tend to disappear from view, such as the pro-life movement opposing abortion rights. Second, it foregrounds its connections with the political class. Third, it highlights the system of alliances reactivated and cemented, in the context of a struggle over sexual politics, between conservative Catholic groups and far-right formations. Fourth, it does not circumvent the internal struggles that accompanied the construction of an effective bloc. In light of their analysis, Prearo and De Guerre (2016) conclude that “the ‘anti-gender’ movement . . . cannot be reduced to an emotional reaction to the panic spread by the ‘no-gender’ campaign, nor to the [Catholic] Church’s intrusion into Italian politics.” Indeed, even if it remains quite literally a *reactionary*

bloc—reacting to progressive sexual politics and to the autonomization of feminist and queer knowledges as academic fields (Garbagnoli 2014, 257)—what the anti-gender bloc has been conducting since 2013 is also a struggle for hegemony, against the background of internal struggles for hegemony among its different segments. Taken together, Garbagnoli’s analysis of the emergence of “gender ideology” as a rhetorical device, and Prearo and De Guerre’s analysis of the field of social and political forces that cohered around it, allow us to track the different articulatory practices that presided over the formation of the Italian anti-gender bloc and its relative success.<sup>96</sup>

Lorenzo Bernini entered into this debate by emphasizing yet another element that favored, in his view, the rise of the anti-gender bloc, or at least prevented the construction of an effective resistance to it: the fractures and antagonisms existing among the social forces that would have been expected to homogeneously oppose the conservative attack. Bernini formulates this argument for the first time in an essay titled “Uno spettro s’aggira per l’Europa...Sugli usi e gli abusi del concetto di ‘gender’” (A Specter is Haunting Europe...On the Uses and Abuses of the Concept of “Gender”) (2014).<sup>97</sup> Here, he highlights that Luisa Muraro—a prominent figure of the Italian “thought of sexual difference,”<sup>98</sup> which detains “an indisputable hegemony within Italian feminism” (84)—has explicitly aligned herself with Pope Francis’ opposition to the introduction of sexual education programs in public schools, allegedly informed by “gender theory.” Mobilizing well-known conflicts *within* feminist theory yet projecting them into the context of the current conservative campaign, Muraro argues that “gender theory” is indeed guilty of negating sexual difference (Muraro and Sasso 2014). In a later essay, Bernini (2016) also notes the stance adopted by some figures on the Left against stepchild adoption, originally contained in the Cirinnà Bill on LGBT civil unions but later removed under anti-gender and Vatican pressures. The article on stepchild adoption would have allowed one member of a registered couple to legally adopt his or her partner’s children, thus further undermining, according to the Vatican, the heterosexual foundations of the family. Among those siding with the Vatican in this context were Giuseppe Vacca, the current president of the Gramsci Foundation, and Mario Tronti, one of the founding theorists of Italian workerism (*operaismo*) and now member of the centrist Democratic Party. Thus, while Prearo and De Guerre point at the ways in which the anti-gender ideology managed to compose a bloc

out of heterogeneous social and political forces, Bernini foregrounds the lack of a similar process on the other front; or, to be more precise, he tracks the ramifications of the anti-gender bloc where one may expect to find resistance to it.

Additionally, Bernini notes the lack of reaction on the part of the Italian academy at large. In his view, this is not surprising, for the latter “has always been reluctant to recognize academic dignity to gender studies and queer theories” (Bernini 2014, 85). The only exception at the time of his earlier essay was a letter with which the feminist Società Italiana delle Storiche (Italian Society of Women Historians) addressed the Minister of Education, University and Research.<sup>99</sup> The letter states: “A ‘theory of gender’ . . . does not exist. This category [gender], deployed in a fruitful way across different disciplines that by now constitute the field of *gender studies*, does not introduce a theory, a vision of man and woman, but rather a conceptual tool that enables us to think and analyze the historical-social dimensions of the relations between the sexes in all their complexity and articulation” (Società Italiana delle Storiche, quoted in Bernini 2014, 85). Adopting this position, Bernini argues that indeed *a* gender theory does not exist, and offers instead an account of the heterogeneous field of contemporary queer theories: from its prehistory in the analyses of Michel Foucault and Monique Wittig, to the pioneering works of Teresa de Lauretis, Judith Butler, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, to the queer of color critique of José E. Muñoz and the antisocial thesis of Leo Bersani and Lee Edelman (Bernini 2014, 85-87). Bernini’s move is double. On the one hand, he responds to the conservative campaign by negating the very existence of a homogeneous and prescriptive “gender theory.” He does so by highlighting the heterogeneity characterizing the contemporary fields of gender studies and queer theories. On the other hand, he identifies the invisibilization of this heterogeneity—which he attributes both to the hegemony of the “thought of sexual difference” in Italian feminism and to broader academic resistances against these forms of critical knowledge—among the conditions of possibility for the current conservative attack to thrive.

A similar double move was at work, if more implicitly, in Garbagnoli’s (2014) earlier essay, yet from a different theoretical standpoint. Upon signaling, as Bernini does, that sexual difference thinker Luisa Muraro explicitly joined Pope Francis in his critique of anti-discrimination programs in schools allegedly informed by “gender theory,” Garbagnoli ironically comments: “in Italy we enjoy the privilege of having ‘gender

theory' even before the analyses, the research, the theories [in the plural] developed within the field of gender studies can be studied and discussed with the proper intellectual and institutional means that this would require" (253). Such intellectual means are to be found, in Garbagnoli's view, not so much in queer theories as in the work of French radical materialist feminists such as Christine Delphy, Colette Guillaumin, Nicole-Claude Mathieu, and Monique Wittig, whose reception, she argues, continues to encounter strong resistances in Italy.<sup>100</sup> Hence, she concludes her analysis by quoting two of them:

of "gender theory" we can say, as Colette Guillaumin wrote about "race," that: no, "gender theory" does not exist. Or actually yes: "gender theory" does exist, but it is not what it pretends to be. It is not *the-theory*, nor the "lesbian feminist" and "homosexualist" *ideology* that allegedly produce violence, sadness, and natural catastrophes. Rather, it is a reactionary rhetorical device whose goal is delegitimizing knowledges and struggles that denaturalize the sexual order. In so doing, it is meant to perpetuate the brutality and tyranny of a system of oppression that inferiorizes women and/or non-straight people (Wittig 1992). (Garbagnoli 2014, 260)<sup>101</sup>

The rejoinder that "gender ideology" (or "gender theory" in the singular) in fact *does not exist*—put forward by the Italian Society of Women Historians, picked up by Garbagnoli with a difference, and more explicitly embraced by Bernini—became one of the most common progressive responses to the war on "gender ideology" in Italy. However, as we shall see, it also contributed to produce yet another front of antagonism, this time among queer critics themselves.

In response to the widespread circulations of the rejoinder, Federico Zappino and Deborah Ardilli published a polemical essay titled "La volontà di negare. La teoria del gender e il panico eterosessuale" (The Will to Negate: Gender Theory and Straight Panic) (2015). In this piece, Zappino and Ardilli develop three central arguments. First, they term those who argue that a "gender theory" as such does not exist, "negationists." According to Zappino and Ardilli, negationism has become a liberal-progressive common sense that must be contested and resisted because of its collusion with "straight panic." In their view, negationists go on explaining that there is not a "gender theory," but rather different "respectable" theories that do

not possess a prescriptive character and certainly are not meant to negate sexual difference. In so doing, negationists are accused of trying to comfort a straight audience that *must* feel threatened, instead, by the revolutionary potential of queer feminist theory. Indeed, their second argument is that a gender theory *does* exist, and its primary goal is precisely that of negating sexual difference by exposing the heterosexual matrix that presides over its production. They identify such a theory with Butler's work on gender performativity. Hence, in a third move, Zappino and Ardilli recall the queer gesture of reclaiming the insult—first and foremost the insult “queer”—in order to reclaim not only “gender theory,” but also “gender ideology.” In this respect, they write: “While it is clear to us that there are different historical and philosophical stratifications of the concept of ‘ideology,’ we wish to emphasize one of its many possible meanings: that of a theory that becomes practice” (Zappino and Ardilli 2015). Their reference, here, is Gramsci.<sup>102</sup>

But is “gender ideology” open to a reclaiming similar to the reclaiming of the insult “queer”? In order to reclaim “gender ideology,” Zappino and Ardilli make it entirely coincide with Butler's theory of gender performativity, signaling the extent to which the conservative bloc itself identifies Butler as an exemplary gender ideologue.<sup>103</sup> However, according to the critical approach to the concept of ideology associated with Gramsci—which Zappino and Ardilli explicitly invoke—ideology performs first and foremost a work of condensation; or, in Hall's terms, a work of articulation. In the discourse of the anti-gender movement, Butler's theory gets articulated to a broader field of heterogeneous elements: from same-sex marriage to the use of LGBT rights as aid conditionality. For instance, Pope Francis has protested the fact that “international bodies . . . make financial aid to poor countries dependent on the introduction of laws to establish ‘marriage’ between persons of the same sex” (Pope Francis 2016, 191). While this statement is imprecise—for same-sex marriage has never been put forward as a condition for international aid—we saw in the case of Uganda that other legal battles concerning LGBT rights have been deployed to that end, both by powerful donors and by international financial institutions such as the World Bank. Thus, commenting on the Pope's statement, David Paternotte and Sarah Bracke register the postcolonial dimension of the debate on “gender ideology” and situate the latter in relation to current debates on homonationalism and sexual imperialism:

[The] framing [deployed by Pope Francis] invokes the post-colonial

in powerful ways, and notably the idea of national self-determination. It is also intricately connected to the ways in which gender relations and sexuality have figured, and continue to figure, in colonial and imperial discourses and practices. . . . The Vatican's current insistence on "ideological colonization" mobilizes a powerful critique of global practices of development aid as well as postcolonial sentiments and identities at large. (Paternotte and Bracke 2016, 150)

In light of this analysis, what exactly would we reclaim by reclaiming "gender ideology"? Can the reclaiming entirely by-pass the articulatory work performed by the anti-gender discourse? Can Butler be reclaimed and aid conditionality simply be left out?<sup>104</sup> Rather than to reclaim the insult, I suggest that a Gramscian notion of ideology must be deployed first and foremost to conduct a conjunctural analysis of the production and circulation of the conservative campaign, in order to reconstruct the terrain on which the ideology of the anti-gender bloc has been able to install itself.

A number of such conjunctural analyses are proceeding, today, from Eastern Europe. These analyses read the contemporary war on "gender ideology" as a moral panic taking roots in the context of the current politico-economic crisis. For instance, Weronika Grzebalska, Eszter Kováts, and Andrea Petó (2017) write: "To paraphrase Gramsci, the globalized (neo) liberal democratic order is in crisis, and as a new paradigm is struggling to be born, various morbidities are allowed to rise to the surface." Among such morbidities is, in their view, the attack on "gender." Hence, they term gender a "symbolic glue" able to condense heterogeneous ideological elements, to construct a united front among heterogeneous conservative forces, and even struggling to produce a new common sense.<sup>105</sup> Their conclusion is that taking critique seriously means understanding the space occupied by the anti-gender bloc and finding ways to seize the same space on different terms. Rather than reclaiming the insult of ideology, such a reading *practices* the reclaiming by unpacking the ideological struggle conducted by the anti-gender bloc in the first place. This reading, in turn, needs to be grounded on concrete analyses such as the ones offered by Garbagnoli, Prearo and De Guerre, and Bernini in the Italian context. These analyses—especially if taken together—allow us to track the different articulatory practices presiding over the construction of the anti-gender bloc. Even if none of them frame their intervention in terms of ideology or counter-ideology, I suggest that their concrete analyses are more useful

to reach a materialist understanding of the war on “gender ideology” than Zappino and Ardilli’s queer reclaiming of the insult.

And yet, in his response to Zappino and Ardilli, Bernini (2016) explicitly rejects not only their reclaiming of “gender ideology,” but the very understanding of critical theory *as* ideology. He does so primarily by contesting Zappino and Ardilli’s reading of Butler. In his view, Butler’s theory of gender performativity is not meant to *negate* sexual difference, but rather to question its self-evidence and to turn it into a *problem* for critical theory and political practice.<sup>106</sup> Thus, while Zappino argues that “queer [theory] is more or less explicitly informed by a normative—or ideological—commitment to a subversion of [the heterosexual matrix]” (Zappino 2016, 196), Bernini insists that the theoretical perspective adopted by Butler as well as Foucault is “critical, not normative” (Bernini 2016, 377). Against Zappino and Ardilli’s critique of “negationism,” Bernini reaffirms a distinction between the “gender theory” or “gender ideology” produced by the anti-gender bloc as the target of its conservative campaign and the multiplicity of critical theories populating the field of gender and queer studies. Bernini’s rejoinder, in turn, led to a rupture with Zappino.<sup>107</sup> The latter accused the former not only of homonormativity, but first and foremost of safeguarding academic interests (the respectability of gender studies) over the radical knowledges produced by queer political formations (gender ideology reclaimed). An all too familiar conflict was thus reaffirmed between academic knowledge and activist knowledge, at a time when both were under attack and in a place that in fact never witnessed a proper institutionalization of feminist and queer theories.

However, virtually absent from the debate between Zappino and Bernini was an acknowledgment of the fact that Bernini’s own position was embedded in a specific political project. Living and working in Verona—a bastion of the Italian far-right and one of the epicenters of the anti-gender movement from its inception—Bernini, like Prearo, has been participating in the setting up of a series of counter-conferences aimed at explaining the nature of gender studies to the general public, first and foremost teachers and parents.<sup>108</sup> His insistence on the critical nature of gender studies and queer theories must be understood within the context of this attempt to practice counter-information, or even counter-hegemony. As he writes in his reply to Zappino and Ardilli, “when I happen . . . to give public lectures in front of parents who are afraid that their children might be forced to change their gender or might be masturbated by their

teachers, I deploy the formula ‘gender theory does not exist’ to explain that the theories elaborated within contemporary gender studies and queer studies . . . are not normative but critical theories” (Bernini 2016, 378). This makes clear that, for Bernini, the fact that queer theory is a critical rather than normative practice does not mean that it maintains no relation to the field of political struggle. On the contrary, that perspective marks the specific position from which he accesses the political field: the position of an intellectual carrying a specific kind of knowledge. As he puts it in a forthcoming introductory book to queer theories, “critical philosophers are militant intellectuals” (Bernini 2017). Here, he specifies his view of the relationship between (queer) theory and political practice:

queer theories can be described as critical political philosophies which assume the standpoint of sexual minorities and denounce the regime that minoritizes them as arbitrary, abusive, and intolerable. While doing so, they do not necessarily offer solutions or alternatives, but leave the task of elaborating and experimenting both of them to collective and individual practices of struggle. (Bernini 2017)

Thus, drawing on Butler’s critique of normativity but especially on Foucault’s positioning as a critical and specific intellectual—and echoing Foucault’s refusal to tell others what to do—Bernini takes issue first and foremost with the *tone* of Zappino and Ardilli’s intervention. In his view, their polemic against “negationism” invalidates not only the analyses of those who have been trying to understand the emergence of the war on “gender ideology” in Italy, but also specific political practices deployed by LGBTQ formations to resist the conservative attack. Among these are the counter-conferences organized in Verona in the context of which Bernini has been elaborating his distinction between “gender theory” or “gender ideology” and the multiplicity of feminist and queer theories as critical forms of knowledge.

Thus, despite Bernini’s insistence on the critical nature of queer theory, the explicit link between his analysis and his political practice in fact proves Zappino and Ardilli’s point: critical theory *is* a form of counter-ideology. But to this we must add, following Hall, that every ideological practice performs its work within a regime of relative autonomy, that is, according to its own internal logics. Hence, critical theory need not renounce its specific mode of analysis in order to enter the field of social and political struggles.

Garbagnoli suggests something similar in her earlier essay: “I believe that the increasing vulgarization, the media success, and the political effects of the uses of this expression [‘gender ideology’] demand that we researchers within the field of gender studies speak up, in the spirit of a knowledge that is intrinsically conceived as *engagé* precisely by virtue of its autonomy” (Garbagnoli 2014, 251). According to Garbagnoli, it is the *autonomy* of critical theory that makes it a social and political force. The debate between Bernini and Zappino and Ardilli might suggest that careful analysis must be traded for political engagement or the other way around. On the contrary, I have argued that the concrete analyses offered in the Italian context by Garbagnoli, Prearo and De Guerre, and Bernini allow us to understand the politico-ideological struggles conducted by the anti-gender bloc in this particular European periphery. In other words, I suggest that the best way in which critical theory might contribute to progressive political change is to keep doing its work—in a relation of relative autonomy, and articulation, to the field of social and political struggles.



## CONCLUSION

# QUEER MARXISM WITHOUT GUARANTEES

In “The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees” (1986b), Hall does not suggest that Marxism abandons political economy as a terrain of critique and transformative political practice, but that it abandons the economic as a final guarantee of both theory and practice. In his view, as I have argued at length in the first chapter, the political and the ideological are not fully, but *relatively autonomous* from the economic. As he writes: “The relations between these different levels are, indeed, *determinate*: i.e. mutually determining,” and yet “[t]he economic *cannot* effect a final closure on the domain of ideology, in the strict sense of always guaranteeing a result” (43). The economic cannot secure a final guarantee because, on the one hand, “ideological categories are developed, generated and transformed according to their own laws of development and evolution” (43); and, on the other hand, because of the “necessary ‘openness’ of historical development to practice and struggle” (43). Thus, politics and ideology do not form out of thin air, but the ways in which the material conditions of their emergence are worked through in practice is not determined and guaranteed in advance.

Hall developed this argument in the 1980s, at a crossroads between a protracted crisis of orthodox Marxism and the emergence of new theoretical moments on the Left. But the latter, in his view, “seem . . . to continue to stand on the shoulders of the very theories they have just definitely destroyed” (Hall 1986b, 28). He follows:

Had marxism not existed, “post-marxism” would have had to

invent it, so that “deconstructing” it once more would give the “deconstructionists” something further to do. All this gives marxism a curious life-after-death quality. It is constantly being “transcended” and “preserved.” (Hall 1986b, 28)<sup>1</sup>

One of the targets of Hall’s critique, in this essay and elsewhere, is Foucault. As I have argued in the third chapter, Hall suggests that Foucault’s replacement of ideology with the notion of discourse risks collapsing the latter, in fact, with the dominant ideology, but in the absence of a proper conceptualization of *how* any given ideology becomes dominant—or hegemonic—and of the *relations* between competing ideologies and the social and political forces they manage to articulate. Whether one agrees or not with Hall’s critique of Foucault’s own work, I have suggested that we can identify something akin to this dynamic in Massad’s (2007) critique of sexual imperialism as well as in Puar’s (2013a; 2013b; Puar and Mikdashi 2012a; 2012b) most recent reflections on homonationalism. Both Massad and Puar, albeit in different ways, draw on Foucault’s conceptualization of power. However, both of them implicitly reproduce a totalizing notion of ideology whose very totalizing character can go unchecked because of the absence of any specific conceptualization of ideology. Massad even seems to resurrect some economic assumptions when he needs to explain the core of his otherwise Foucauldian analysis, that is, why the deployment of sexuality would fail to take root and gain hegemony in Arab social formations. Looking at these contemporary appropriations of Foucault, we may further qualify Hall’s diagnosis thirty years later: not only is Marxism granted a “life-after-death quality,” but its posthumous iterations within the folds of other theoretical languages can end up amplifying some of the problems that had supposedly incited a departure from Marxism in the first place. If one stops naming a problem—in this case, ideology and its determinations—the problem may easily come back with a vengeance, especially if one does so without really shifting the *problematic*.

And Marxist problematics are coming back in the field of contemporary queer critique, which had been by and large hegemonized, from the late 1980s onward, by post-Marxist conceptual apparatuses. Marxism is reappearing today not just as a disavowed ghost “still rattling around in the theoretical machine” (Hall 1986b, 32), but in the form of a conscious reencounter. On the one hand, this “Marxist renaissance” in queer theory is taking place within the context of a more general return to Marxism in

times of politico-economic (and ideological) crisis. On the other hand, central to the reencounter between queer theory and Marxism has been the appearance of homonormativity, homonationalism, and sexual imperialism: three intertwined conceptual abstractions, among others, that help us name the contemporary articulations of progressive sexual politics to the politico-economic project of neoliberalism, for the consolidation of its hegemony nationally and transnationally. I have been arguing throughout this dissertation that, in this context, queer theory must try to reconstruct for itself a Marxist terrain of critique without subsuming the analysis of sexual formations and sexual politics—explicitly or implicitly—under resurrected forms of economic reductionism or too abstract understandings of the laws of capitalist development. One way to do so, I propose, is to anchor the emerging queer Marxism in Hall's critical interventions in the 1970s and 1980s.

My claim is also that such a queer Marxism would resist too quick a dismissal of identity politics. Drawing on Hall's analysis of Thatcherism as well as on Duggan's (2003) work on homonormativity, I have posited that the articulation of progressive sexual politics to the consolidation of neoliberal hegemony should not lead to an abandonment of identity politics by queer critics. Let me briefly recall some key aspects of this argument. First: as Hall argues, ideology is a terrain of struggle where two can play at the game. That terrain must be seized, not defected. Moreover, to call for an abandonment of identity because of its contemporary articulations rightward—in the form of homonormativity, homonationalism, and sexual imperialism—means presuming that there can be political languages and modes of organizing that will be forever resistant to contradictory articulations. I suggest that this presumption is rooted in a misreading of the social and political fields. Second: a political project that is truly invested into making a difference does not elude the contradictory terrain of common sense, but immerses itself into it in order to disarticulate and rearticulate its constitutive elements. That identity has become common sense across virtually all social segments in Western societies—in no small measure an achievement of feminist, antiracist, and LGBTQ politico-ideological struggles—is a good reason to continue working on and within its terms, not to declare them bankrupt. Third: identity political formations, as Duggan points out, provide the Left today with some of its most vibrant forces. Abandoning the terrain of identity politics means depriving a possible counter-hegemonic bloc of one of its key sites of articulation.

Throughout the second and third chapters, I have deepened the latter

claim by turning to the processes of recomposition taking place *within* contemporary LGBTQ formations. I have argued that the struggles conducted by queer of color and queer diasporic critique within the field of queer theory (and politics) can be understood as a form of counter-hegemonic identity politics. It is first and foremost by means of such intersectional critiques that queer theory is being able to *read* the emergence of homonormativity, homonationalism, and sexual imperialism. This is the case when queer critics read the “culture wars” about race within LGBTQ formations—such as the gay attacks on the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center in the late 1990s, mentioned in the second chapter—not just as an instance of gay racism and conservatism, but as part and parcel of a broader shift in the ideology of the neoliberal bloc; or when they center the experiences of queer migrants of color—as in Reddy’s (2011) reading of the “gay Pakistani asylum seeker” in the United States, discussed in the third chapter—not only as sites of intersection of multiple forms of oppression, but as a privileged vantage on the contradictions between state and capital in the context of the uneven globalization of neoliberalism.

I have suggested that, through such readings, queer of color and queer diasporic critics are conducting a hegemonic struggle around the color line within queer theory, generating internal fronts of antagonism that force processes of redefinition and recomposition onto the field. In the second chapter, looking at the trajectory of black lesbian feminist critique in the Netherlands through the political life narrative of Gloria Wekker, I went as far as to suggest that overlapping intersectional struggles taking place across different identity formations—the struggle around race within feminist and LGBTQ formations as well as struggles around gender and sexuality within antiracist formations—may have produced contemporary antiracist organizing, rather than LGBTQ organizing, as a privileged site for the articulation of queer critique. Through this displacement, recomposition reaches its peak. My reading of that displacement is located in the Dutch context and need not be generalized too quickly, yet it maintains important parallels with transformations taking place elsewhere, such as the formation of Black Lives Matter (BLM) in the United States. Looking at these processes of recomposition and drawing on Ferguson’s (2004) specific proposal of a queer of color theoretical practice, I have argued that queer of color critique mediates today both our understanding of homonormativity and the “Marxist renaissance” in queer theory. It does so, I have suggested, by conducting a struggle to hegemonize the color line within the field,

hence deploying a counter-hegemonic form of identity politics.

To be sure, many of the critics discussed in this dissertation, on whose analyses I have relied in order to offer my own, participate in a general call to move away or “beyond” identity politics. I have suggested that this is often due to a misreading of identity politics as the single-issue politics put forward by large lobbying organizations. In line with this misreading, many embrace intersectionality as a critique of identity politics, even as one of the first explicit formulations of identity politics is to be found in the “Combahee River Collective Statement” ([1977] 1983)—a foundational text for black lesbian feminism and intersectional critique. In light of its genealogy and because of its activation of key processes of recomposition in the contemporary theoretical and political fields, I have proposed to conceptualize identity politics as an expansive and intersectional field of antagonisms punctuated by forms of identification and disidentification: a politics that acknowledges the salience of gendered, racialized, and sexual formations (among others), mobilizes social forces emerging from such formations and at their intersections, hence interrupts the exclusionary universalisms that have historically organized the political field.

Even as I maintain that a reconceptualization of identity politics may prevent its dismissal both by queer critics and on the Left at large, a specific critique has been taking root in times of homonormativity, homonationalism, and sexual imperialism that cannot be reduced to a simple misreading of the problem. As I have pointed out in the second chapter, some Marxist critics warn about the *reification* of identity under capitalism, particularly in its current neoliberal phase. According to this view, what we perceive as “our” identity is actually a product and a function of a process of increasing social fragmentation that is meant to detach us, ideologically, from a totality of social relations. Identities are “extracted” from the social totality through mechanisms of isolation and particularization of certain aspects of social life (such as sexual desire), and quite literally sold back to us as the “truth” of ourselves and a source of value, most clearly through practices of market segmentation as well as through a segmentation of the labor force itself at the level of production. Puar (2012) similarly argues, from a non-Marxist perspective, that identity and interpellation are central technologies of power in disciplinary societies, but she makes this argument only to suggest that in contemporary societies of control the interpellation of identity has lost any such centrality. Hence, unlike most critics of the reification of identity, Puar’s critique of identity politics is primarily grounded not on the assumption

that the latter are integral to the current organization of exploitative social relations, but on the idea, drawn from Deleuze, that power today is by and large indifferent to the problem of identity. In other words, Puar insists—as I do, following Hall—that any given formation of power must be challenged on its own terrain. The disagreement is about how to conceptualize power and, consequently, how to define the terrain of struggle.

From a Marxist perspective, instead, Floyd (2009) develops perhaps the most sophisticated critique of the reification of identity. Engaging closely with Lukács’ theorization of the dialectic between reification and totality, Floyd struggles to identify a space for queer theory and politics—even in their most “reified” forms, such as Butler’s (1990) theory of gender performativity or the queer insistence on the *use* of the body as an instrument of pleasure—within a Marxist critique of reification. He does so through two significant moves: on the one hand, he rereads Lukács to shift the focus from the subjective to the objective effects of reification (that is, from consciousness to the body); on the other hand, he rereads reification itself as a process that is not only negative and alienating, but also productive of critical vantages on the social totality. The combination of the two moves allows Floyd to understand the radical reification of the body in queer theory and politics—the body taken as an instrument of pleasure and as an object of analysis *in itself*—not as a moment to be negated, but rather as a point of support for a critical aspiration to totality. While Floyd recovers the conceptual apparatus first developed by Lukács, I have approached his analysis through the lens of Hall’s reading of Gramsci.

As I have observed, Floyd’s reconceptualization of reification beyond its purely negative connotations comes very close to Hall’s reconceptualization of ideology. However, his shift away from the reification of consciousness in fact allows him to by-pass the problem of counter-ideology altogether and to pose too immediate a relation between the laws of capitalist development—the dialectic between reification and totality—and the materialization of the queer body as a site resistance. Hence his conclusion that, in times of homonormativity, a queer politicization of the reified sexual body in the public space directly militates against the privatizing reification of identity put forward by identity politics in their current neoliberal articulations. In this analysis, the political and ideological practices activated within LGBTQ formations in order to understand and contest the sexual politics of neoliberalism disappear from view. Most importantly, it is the antagonism around the color line activated by queer of color and queer diasporic

formations that *cannot* fully appear, if we read it—as I do—as a form of counter-hegemonic identity politics. I have insisted on this point not to disqualify Floyd’s analysis, but on the contrary, because the critique of reification and the recovery of the dialectic between reification and totality form one of the most promising terrains for a contemporary reencounter between queer theory and Marxism. Hence, I suggest that this body of thought must find ways to integrate into its analysis an account of the more conjunctural wars of position taking place within the theoretical and political fields. This is the main contribution that Hall’s reading of Gramsci in the 1980s can offer to the current “Marxist renaissance” in queer theory.

My reading of queer of color and queer diasporic formations as engaged in one such hegemonic struggle within the field of queer theory need not imply that most authors appearing throughout my analysis frame or perceive their interventions as part of that struggle. In the context of my discussion of identity politics, this point has some specific implications. That is, to posit that queer of color and queer diasporic critique activate specific processes of recomposition within the field does not require and should not prescribe that they articulate their interventions in such terms. And, shifting from the terrain of theory to the relation between theory and practice, offering a Marxist reading of a field of intersecting identity politics does not require and should not prescribe that the latter speak the language of Marxism (even if some of them do). In other words, a tension must be kept—in theory—between the autonomy of identity politics and their insertion into Marxist analysis. A queer Marxism without guarantees does not just resist a dismissal of identity politics, and it does not just resist a subsumption of identity under resurrected forms of economic reductionism or too abstract understandings of the laws of capitalist development, but first and foremost—in order to avoid all of the above—it registers the *relative autonomy* of identity politics.

As I have argued in the first chapter, the principle of relative autonomy is key to Hall’s reading of Gramsci in the 1980s. In the last chapter of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* ([1985] 2001), Laclau and Mouffe address a similar problem. Here they ask: “is there not an incompatibility between the proliferation of political spaces proper to a radical democracy and the construction of collective identities on the basis of the logic of equivalence?” (181) The logic of equivalence is the name that Laclau and Mouffe give to the alliances to be forged among different political forces in order to build a counter-hegemonic historical bloc. However, the way

they solve the tension between equivalence and autonomy, at a theoretical level, is precisely by reducing them to internal logics of hegemony itself. According to them, while equivalence and autonomy appear to simply oppose each other, we should rather regard them as complementing and limiting each other: they are two “*social logics*, which intervene to different degrees in the constitution of every social identity, and which partially limit their mutual effects” (183). On the one hand, equivalence impedes a final closure of the social, for it constantly produces an antagonistic polarization of the social into two camps. On the other hand, since every element of a chain of equivalence is split and maintains a certain degree of particularity, autonomy limits the logic of equivalence and impedes that such a polarization is ever fully stabilized into a new closure.

By reducing equivalence and autonomy to two logics internal to hegemony and limiting each other, Laclau and Mouffe aim to account in theory for the radical contingency that, in their view, keeps the social formation endlessly open to new articulations. However, in so doing, they neutralize the concrete political tensions existing between a politics of hegemony and the autonomy of each social and political force participating in it. At the end of the first chapter, I have highlighted some of these tensions while recovering the experience of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM). Focusing on the different politico-ideological practices they deployed in order to articulate an alliance with the miners on strike against the second Thatcher government, I have argued that the practice of hegemony often involves a suspension of autonomy. Thus, it is not surprising that Laclau and Mouffe’s attempt to reconcile equivalence and autonomy in theory ends up subsuming autonomy under hegemony altogether. Consider the following political remark: “If the demands of a subordinated group are presented purely as negative demands subversive of a certain order, without being linked to any viable project for the reconstruction of specific areas of society, their capacity to act hegemonically will be excluded from the outset . . . and as a result the strategy is condemned to marginality” (Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001, 189). Instead, I suggest that the principle of relative autonomy developed by Hall is better equipped to appropriate heterogeneous political struggles theoretically without subsuming their concrete terrains of intervention.

In this respect, it is useful to contrast the tone of Laclau and Mouffe’s indictment with Hall’s analysis of the gay and feminist critiques emerged within black antiracist formations in the 1980s, which I have briefly recalled

in the second chapter. Hall *does offer* a Gramscian reading of this political moment, and his reading informs my own analysis of the contemporary struggle conducted by queer of color and queer diasporic critique within the field of queer theory. In “New Ethnicities” ([1989] 1996), for instance, he argues that the end of a monolithic black subject under the pressure of black feminist and gay critiques exposes the ways in which race always manifests itself, concretely, in articulation with other axes of identity and oppression. And, in “What is this ‘Black’ in Black Popular Culture?” (1992b), he posits that these articulations explain the very convergence of certain politics of liberation with forms of oppression exercised in other domains. However, this attempt of theoretical recomposition does not abstract from the negation of a black political subject put forward by black feminist and gay critiques. Most importantly, such critiques are not made a target of contempt: “the plurality of antagonisms and differences that now seek to destroy the unity of black politics, given the complexities of the structures of subordination that have been formed by the way in which we were inserted into the black diaspora, is not at all surprising” (32). Thus, it is not surprising either that when Laclau suggested, during a late encounter with Hall on Argentinian television and while discussing diasporic politics, that *all politics is hegemonic*, Hall replied rather skeptically: “I suppose the most important reservation I have [about what you said] is whether all politics is hegemonic. . . . I suppose my hesitation arises from the example you used, because . . . a diasporic politics is . . . not necessarily a hegemonic politics. It may seek to become one, but I’m not even sure that it does that. So, I think we need to make some distinctions *within* politics.”<sup>2</sup>

Especially the difference in *tone* between Hall and Laclau and Mouffe is blatant. I suggest that this difference is symptomatic of two divergent theoretical practices. While Laclau and Mouffe try to construct a closed and self-sufficient theoretical edifice, Hall takes a long detour through the theory of hegemony that however does not prevent him from apprehending heterogeneous political interventions while preserving their differences and determinations through the very process of theoretical appropriation. In “Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies” (1992a), for instance, he recalls the unsettling encounters of cultural studies with feminism and race and presents both encounters as crucial moments of “interruption.” His account of the appearance of feminism in cultural studies in the 1970s is not dissimilar, in tone, from his analysis of the feminist and gay critiques articulated within black political formations in the 1980s. He describes

feminism as “the thief in the night” breaking in at the Birmingham CCCS: “I use the metaphor deliberately: As the thief in the night, it broke in; interrupted, made an unseemly noise, seized the time, crapped on the table of cultural studies” (282). One of the first outcomes of this appearance was the collective volume *Women Take Issue* (Women’s Studies Group, CCCS 1978). Hall observes: “The title of the volume in which [feminism’s] dawn-raid was first accomplished—*Women Take Issue*—is instructive: for they ‘took issue’ in both senses—took over that year’s book and initiated a quarrel” (Hall 1992a, 282). This feminist intervention is not portrayed as an attempt of hegemonization. Indeed, as Charlotte Brunsdon recalls, from the Women’s Studies Group that came to be established at the CCCS a proposal emerged, in 1976, to set up a separatist group. The proposal, which encountered strong resistances, was informed by the practice of the women’s liberation movement (Brunsdon 1996, 281-282).

But there is more in Hall’s account:

Because of the growing importance of feminist work and the early beginnings of the feminist movement outside in the very early 1970s, many of us in the Centre—mainly, of course, men—thought it was time there was good feminist work in cultural studies. . . . And yet, when it broke in through the window, every single unsuspected resistance rose to the surface—fully installed patriarchal power, which believed it had disavowed itself. (Hall 1992a, 282)

It is not difficult to read between the lines of this passage how precisely the radically anti-hegemonic nature of this feminist intervention is what Hall values the most. This does not prevent him from registering its hegemonizing effects. Elsewhere, he writes: “Feminism and the social movements around sexual politics have . . . had an unsettling effect on everything once thought of as ‘settled’ in the theoretical universe of the Left. . . . This is more than simply the question of the Left being ‘nice’ to women or lesbians or gay men or beginning to address their forms of oppression and exclusion. It has to do with . . . the recognition that *all* social practices and forms of domination—including the politics of the Left—are always inscribed in and to some extent secured by sexual identity and positioning” (Hall 1989, 132). However, it remains essential, for Hall, to recognize that *certain* politics, at *certain* moments, are not for *all*, and that they may derive their political force precisely from an active refusal to enter any hegemonic chain of equivalence.

It is also in this sense that I suggest we understand the relative autonomy of the political in general, and of identity politics in particular. The point is not just that sexual identities and practices should not be reduced to an unmediated effect of economic structures, as their articulations depend on ideological and political practices that are relatively autonomous from the economic level. This is a key theoretical point that must certainly be located at the core of the contemporary “Marxist renaissance” in queer theory. But the relative autonomy of politico-ideological struggle also has crucial implications at the level of *theoretical practice*. That is, the political maintains a relative autonomy not only from the economic, but also from theory itself.

A reflection on theoretical practice runs throughout this dissertation as a whole, but it is particularly central to the third chapter. Looking at the polemics initiated by Massad and Puar with Helem and AlQaws respectively, I have argued that both of them tend to impose theoretical abstractions onto a field of concrete political struggles. Following some of the critics of Massad and Puar, who point at their diasporic location in the United States as the source of some of the limitations to be found in their respective analyses, I have suggested that the question of diaspora further emphasizes the already complex relation between theory and practice. Yet, rather than suggesting that the diasporic standpoint *impedes* an appropriation of Southern political struggles that preserves their concrete determinations, I have recalled Rao’s (2014; 2015) materialist analyses of the formation of homophobia in contemporary Uganda, in order to illustrate an alternative approach to the problems of homonationalism and sexual imperialism. In fact, I have pointed out that the limitations to be found in Puar’s and Massad’s respective analyses are due, to a significant extent, not to their diasporic standpoint as much as to their *disconnection* from the theories and theoretical practices that characterize the broader field of queer diasporic critique. Thus, this chapter ends on the question of theoretical practice. Looking at the contemporary war on “gender ideology” in Italy, and paying particular attention to the antagonisms activated among queer critics themselves about *how* to read the conservative attack, I have proposed that critical theory be understood as a form of counter-ideological practice only to the extent that one acknowledges the relative autonomy of politics and ideology. This means, on the one hand, that theory contributes to political struggle *in its own way*, without retreating from its intellectual protocols. On the other hand, it means that theory does not reduce the political field to

the abstractions produced according to such intellectual protocols.

In “The Problem of Ideology,” Hall insists that since history is open to practice and struggle, Marxist theory itself must be kept open to practice and struggle. This is what he terms Marxism without guarantees. In his view, the positing of the economic as a guaranteed determination of historical processes (whether in general or “in the last instance”) has helped cultivating the illusion of the capacity of prediction, of theoretical certainty. But such an illusion “represents the end of the *process of theorizing*, of the development and refinement of new concepts and explanations which, alone, is the sign of a living body of thought, capable still of engaging and grasping something of the truth about new historical realities” (Hall 1986b, 43). In this sense, despite Foucault’s reluctance to understand his own theorizing as a form of counter-ideological practice, and despite the critiques that Hall formulated against Foucault’s theoretical practice, a contemporary queer Marxism has something to learn from Foucault’s stubborn refusal to tell others what to do. In fact, I suggest that Hall and Foucault to a certain extent converge in this respect. As I have recalled in the second chapter, Ferguson (2010) registers that, in the context of Thatcherism, Hall and others within the field of cultural studies struggled to facilitate the emergence of organic intellectuals even as they questioned any assumption of transparency and correspondence between the theoretical field and the field of social and political practices. Thus, the notions of intellectual labor and theoretical practice emerging at the CCCS do not differ as sharply from Foucault’s ([1977] 1980) positioning as a critical and specific intellectual. For both Hall and Foucault, the intellectual does not prescribe what must happen in the field of social and political practices, but attempts to appropriate such practices in theory while acknowledging the specific social location of her or his own intellectual labor.

According to this view, and in light of my analyses throughout this dissertation, I suggest that a queer Marxist *politics* struggles to forge broad systems of alliances in order to sustain the emergence of a counter-hegemonic bloc in times of neoliberalism, homonormativity, homonationalism, and sexual imperialism. A queer Marxist *theory*, instead, participates in that struggle by acknowledging the relative autonomy of the political—and, more specifically, of identity politics. That is, a queer Marxism without guarantees first and foremost lets go of the pretension to fully recompose in theory what can only ever be recomposed in practice.





# NOTES

## *Introduction*

1. Throughout the dissertation, I employ the acronyms LGBTQ or LGBT depending on whether the inclusion of “queer” fits or not the heterogeneous political subject referenced in each specific discussion.
2. The video of the protest is available on the website of BLM Toronto: <https://blacklivesmatter.ca/proud/> (accessed January 15, 2017).
3. The announcement of the invitation of BLM by the organization of the Toronto Pride is available at: [http://www.pridetoronto.com/wp-content/uploads/2016-02-10\\_2016-Pride-Toronto-Honoured-Group-Black-Lives-Matter-Toronto-Media-Release.pdf](http://www.pridetoronto.com/wp-content/uploads/2016-02-10_2016-Pride-Toronto-Honoured-Group-Black-Lives-Matter-Toronto-Media-Release.pdf) (accessed January 15, 2017).
4. In the wake of the mass shooting at the LGBTQ nightclub Pulse, in Orlando, on June 12, 2016, the organization of the San Francisco Pride announced an increase in police presence and the introduction of security screening for the participants. The local chapter of BLM was among the groups that responded to the announcement by withdrawing from the Pride, which that year had been organized around the theme of “social and economic justice.” BLM’s statement is available at: <http://blacklivesmatter.com/in-response-to-increased-policing-of-civic-center-grand-marshals-awardees-withdraw-from-participation-in-pride-parade/> (accessed January 15, 2017).
5. See the section “About Us” of BLM’s website: <http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/> (accessed January 15, 2017).
6. For an analysis of the increasing engagement of the LGBT movement with the market in the United States throughout the 1990s, see Alexandra Chasin, *Selling Out: The Gay and Lesbian Movement Goes to Market* (2000). The book includes a specific discussion of the marketization of Pride marches.
7. The notion of the “color line” originally refers to the racial segregation that persisted in the United States after the abolition of slavery in 1865. The notion was first formulated by Frederick Douglass in his

essay “The Color Line” (1881). It was later picked up by W. E. B. Du Bois, who famously argued, in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), that the problem of the color line is the problem of the twentieth century.

8. For instance, BLM’s protest at the Toronto Pride is mentioned in the opening of the call for a panel on ‘Queer Pedagogies on Dissent in the Age of Empire, Homonationalism, and Social Protest,’ organized for the 2017 Annual Meeting of the American Studies Association (ASA). The call is available at: <https://www.theasa.net/collaborate/queer-pedagogies-dissent-age-empire-homonationalism-social-protest> (accessed January 15, 2017).

### *Chapter One*

1. Hall on different occasions took distance from the status of a “founding figure” in the field of cultural studies. In one such occasion, he wrote: “I have always been slightly wary of defining too precisely what is and what isn’t cultural studies, because of the danger of ‘policing’ its boundaries. I suppose that reluctance is particularly appropriate for me, in relation to early British cultural studies, because if anybody is going to find themselves in an ‘originary’ position, as it were, to pronounce what British cultural studies was and was not, I’m the person in that position. And the temptation is always to police it in the name of some ‘essence,’ which was always there. I am in a particularly difficult position because, if there was a beginning, I was there” (Hall 1996, 396).
2. See David Forgacs’ essay “Gramsci and Marxism in Britain” (1989), which provides an excellent reconstruction of the reception and circulation of Gramsci in British Marxism from the 1960s to the 1980s.
3. It is important to remark that this chapter is neither about Gramsci nor, strictly speaking, about Hall’s work as a whole. My account of Hall’s thought is circumscribed to his reading of Gramsci in the 1970s and 1980s, rooted in that conjunctural triangulation between the rise of Thatcherism, a crisis of the Left, and the emergence of new identity politics.
4. Martin Jacques, who edited with Hall the volumes *The Politics of Thatcherism* (1983) and *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s* (1989), was the editor of *Marxism Today* from 1977 until its closure in 1991.

5. The field of cultural studies in its contemporary shape has significantly expanded and internally differentiated itself, contributing to a proliferation of autonomous fields such as women's and gender studies, sexuality and queer studies, ethnic studies, and so forth. It is within these fields and especially at their intersections that contemporary queer debates on the rearticulations rightward of sexual politics are taking place.
6. I discuss what I term the "Marxist renaissance" in queer theory in chapter 2.
7. Through the next two chapters, I question the dismissal of identity politics by contemporary queer critics. In chapter 2, I argue that recent critiques of the theoretical and political pitfalls of identity tend to reduce the broader terrain of identity politics to contemporary forms of single-issue political lobbying. By recovering the tradition of intersectional critique in feminist theory (see Combahee River Collective [1977] 1983; Crenshaw 1989; 1991), I suggest instead that identity politics is better understood as an expansive field of antagonistic identifications and disidentifications. In this first chapter, I prepare the terrain by focusing on Hall's efforts to think through the tensions between identity politics and Marxism, activated by the appearance of new social movements such as feminism, gay liberation, and Black Power on the horizon of the Left.
8. It is equally renown that, even as this moment of institutionalization in 1964 marked the official beginning of cultural studies as a field, it was also the result of a longer trajectory of cultural criticism that made this beginning possible in the first place. Drawing attention to the earlier work by Richard Hoggart in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), Raymond Williams in *Cultural and Society* (1958), and E. P. Thompson in *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), Hall observes: "The search for origins is tempting but illusory. . . . Cultural Studies, in its institutional manifestation, was the result of . . . a break in the 1960s. But the field in which this intervention was made had been initially charted in the 1950s" (Hall [1980] 2005a, 3).
9. For an account of the origins of cultural studies that takes into consideration its positioning vis-à-vis the established disciplines, its political context and ambitions, as well as the role played by key individuals such as Hoggart and Hall, see Norma Schulman, "Conditions of their Own Making: An Intellectual History of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham" (1993).

10. This is by no means a way to respond once and for all to Nelson, Treichler, and Grossberg's concerns about Bennett's broad definition of the field; if anything, because Bennett's own essay was meant precisely to affirm the necessity of moving *beyond* the Gramscian moment in cultural studies. This chapter, on the contrary, sets out to recover that moment.
11. Hall himself always resisted the temptation of policing the boundaries of cultural studies. In the same essay in which he voices his concerns about the dynamics of institutionalization of cultural studies in the United States, he also states: "I don't want to talk about British cultural studies (which is in any case a pretty awkward signifier for me) in a patriarchal way, as the keeper of the conscience of cultural studies, hoping to police you back into line with what it really was if only you knew" (Hall 1992a, 277).
12. This dissertation is located at the crossroads of two different fields: cultural studies *and* political philosophy. One of the consequences of writing in between the two fields has been the choice to engage closely with such a central figure in cultural studies as Hall, yet privileging his more politico-philosophical interventions and isolating them, to a certain extent, from his reflections on media and cultural practices. The latter have been equally central to Hall's work. For instance, key to his understanding of the relations between culture and power has been the conceptualization of media production and consumption that he developed in "Encoding/Decoding" (Hall [1980] 2005b). In this famous essay, Hall distinguishes between the four different "moments" of media production, circulation, consumption, and reproduction, arguing that each moment maintains a degree of "relative autonomy" from the others. This means that every moment entails different possibilities (for instance, the audience of a media product are not just passive receivers of its ideological message). Yet this autonomy is *relative* because the articulation of every moment to the others delimits the very field of possibilities that each moment entails. On the one hand, by privileging Hall's philosophical interventions over his analyses of cultural practices, I partly betray the very nature of his work. On the other hand, I do emphasize the capacity of his theoretical practice to engage with the concrete—more specifically, with the concrete conjuncture of Thatcherism—and I insist on Hall's stubborn refusal to trade an engagement with the concrete for theoretical fluency.

13. It is interesting to note that, besides Hall's own reception of Gramsci, the very appearance of Gramsci's writings in Britain was strictly related to the events of 1956. As David Forgacs highlights, the first remarkable English translation of Gramsci by Louis Marks, *The Modern Prince and Other Writings* (Gramsci [1919-1935] 1957), was initially rejected by its publisher on the grounds of its heterodoxy and published only after the political turmoil which led to the emergence of the New Left: "Marks had submitted the typescript in early 1956 to the publishers Lawrence and Wishart, whose managerial board was at that time directly accountable to the higher committees of the Communist Party of Great Britain. It was passed to the Political Committee for vetting but blocked on the grounds of its heterodoxy by a number of members, including Emile Burns. However, the events of 1956—Khrushchev's secret speech, the Polish and Hungarian crises, the consequent resignations from the CPGB—supervened to produce by the end of the year a changed political and theoretical climate. Maurice Cornforth, then managing editor of Lawrence and Wishart, pressed again for publication and the edition finally appeared in 1957. Gramsci was thus conveyed into the culture of the Left on the tide of the post-1956 thaw, destalinization and the formation of the first new Left" (Forgacs 1989, 73).
14. In fact, this difference is reflective of broader transformations in the social and political fields. When Hall wrote about the Left in Britain, the institutions of the union and the party formed part and parcel of the picture he had in mind. Today, the shifts rightward of some key segments of LGBTQ movements in Europe and the United States go hand-in-hand with the more general shift rightward of the traditional institutions of the Western Left.
15. By insisting on the *relative* autonomy of theoretical practice and on the fact that the concrete-in-thought must pass the verification of the concrete-real, Hall takes some distance from Althusser's otherwise similar remarks on Marx's epistemology. He writes: "Any theory of 'theoretical practice,' such as Althusser's, which seeks to establish an 'impassable threshold' between thought and its object, has to come to terms with the concrete reference (it is not, in our view, an empiricist reduction) embodied in Marx's clear and unambiguous notion . . . that thought proceeds from the '*working-up of observation and conception*'" (Hall [1974] 2003, 130). See also

Hall, “Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates” (1985a). For Althusser’s own account of theoretical practice, see *For Marx* (Althusser [1965] 1969) and *Reading Capital* (Althusser and Balibar [1968] 1970).

16. Since the primary goal of this chapter is not to verify Hall’s reading of Gramsci, but rather to explore how that reading informed Hall’s understating of his “New Times,” I make use of the 1971 selected edition of Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, to which Hall himself had access at his time.
17. The “economism” that came to prevail within the Second International derived from a reading of Marx that transformed the latter’s analysis of the historical tendency toward a crisis of capital, as well as his prefiguration of class struggle and its possible outcomes, into *necessary laws* of historical progress. Such a perspective in fact writes off—at least implicitly—the very importance of struggle, for history itself becomes the driving force that will bring capitalism to its end.
18. Gramsci’s attack on economism and his focus on “the superstructures of civil society” can be understood at least in part contextually, as a *supplement* to Marxism. Hall points out that it was the reluctance of large segments of Marxism to explore the levels of the ideological and the political which led Gramsci, in the first place, to make a particular effort in that direction: “Not that he *ever* forgot or neglected the critical element of the economic foundations of society and its relations. But he contributed relatively little by way of original formulations to *that* level of analysis. However, in the much-neglected areas of conjunctural analysis, politics, ideology and the state, the character of different types of political regimes, the importance of cultural and national-popular questions, and the role of civil society in the shifting balance of relations between different social forces—on *these* issues, Gramsci has an enormous amount to contribute” (Hall 1986a, 8). However, to locate Gramsci as a mere supplement within the broader field of Marxist theory would be misleading, and certainly Hall himself does not commit such a mistake. Gramsci’s thorough conceptualization of the political and the ideological levels was not simply meant to “balance” Marxist economism. It was central, instead, to an attempt at better apprehending the economic *itself* in its historical concreteness. We should not just register that Gramsci never forgot the structuring force of economic relations in

any given society. We should insist, rather, that it was precisely his commitment to a fuller understanding of such relations, and of the mechanisms of their possible transformation, which led him to place particular emphasis on the political and the ideological levels of the social formation.

19. Recently, Peter D. Thomas has subjected Anderson's essay to a meticulous critique in *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism* (2009).
20. In an earlier essay, Chantal Mouffe recognizes that already in "Some Aspects of the Southern Question" Gramsci had posed the question of an alliance between the Northern proletariat and the Southern peasantry with a focus on "the political, moral, and intellectual conditions which were necessary to bring this about" (Mouffe 1977, 178). Yet, already then, at least in part contradicting this previous observation, she concludes as follows: "However, we are still at the stage of the leninist conception of hegemony seen as the leadership of the proletariat over the peasantry, that is to say that it was political leadership which constituted the essential element of this conception in view of the fact that hegemony was thought of in terms of a *class alliance*" (179). She thus moves on to analyze the *Prison Notebooks*, where, in her view, "hegemony in its typically gramscian sense is to be found" (179).
21. Gramsci's passage is quoted in Laclau and Mouffe ([1985] 2001, 66).
22. Gramsci's explicit reference, in this analysis, is to Italian intellectual Benedetto Croce (1866-1952).
23. Commenting on Gramsci's use of hegemony in the earlier essay, Hall observes: "In fact, this is already a theoretically complex and rich formulation. It implies that the actual social or political force which becomes decisive in a moment of organic crisis will not be composed of a single homogenous class but will have a complex social composition. Secondly, it is implicit that its basis of unity will have to be, not an automatic one, given its position in the mode of economic production, but rather a 'system of alliances.' Thirdly, . . . the actual forms of the political struggle will have a *wider* social character—dividing society not simply along 'class versus class' lines, but rather polarizing it along the broadest front of antagonism ('the majority of the working population'). . . . In fact, in national and ethnic struggles in the modern world, the actual field of struggle is often actually

polarized precisely in this more complex and differentiated way” (Hall 1986a, 16). What Hall has in mind at the end of this passage is, clearly, forms of struggle that emerge in postcolonial social formations. And he is right in highlighting the relevance of “Some Aspects of the Southern Question” to critical analyses of postcolonial contexts; not only because it was Gramsci himself, in that essay, who understood the relation between the Italian North and the South in colonial terms—“The Northern bourgeoisie has subjugated the South of Italy and the Islands, and reduced them to exploitable colonies” (Gramsci [1926] 1978, 441)—but also because it was primarily this text which effected the transmission of Gramscian concepts to analyses of postcolonial social formations, most famously to the South Asian *Subaltern Studies Group*. The latter was formed in the early 1980s out of the initiative of a group of historians of India and South Asia. Their inaugural goal was that of carrying out an analysis of colonial and postcolonial societies from the perspective of subaltern classes—a “history from below” in contrast with *both* colonialist *and* bourgeois-nationalist elitism. This is how Ranajit Guha, one of the founders of the group, framed the whole project in his manifesto “On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India” (1982). The manifesto was published in the first volume of the group and its very title, needless to say, is meant to reference Gramsci’s essay on the Southern question. Edward W. Said points out, in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), that Gramsci’s “spatial consciousness” (51) is what makes his conceptual apparatus particularly helpful for an analysis of colonialism. He thus argues that, in “Some Aspects of the Southern Question,” “Gramsci’s brilliant analysis goes . . . beyond its tactical relevance to Italian politics in 1926, for it provides . . . a prelude to *The Prison Notebooks*, in which he gave . . . paramount focus to the territorial, spatial, geographical foundations of social life” (49).

24. The term “post-Marxism” has circulated widely and has acquired different inflections (deployed at times as an accusation and other times as a mark of theoretical and political novelty). It was used derogatively, with reference to *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, by Norman Geras in “Post-Marxism?” (1987), an essay published on *New Left Review*. Laclau and Mouffe responded to Geras’ critique on the same journal (Laclau and Mouffe 1987). In the preface to the second edition of their work, they address the label more generally

and make two key points. First: “we can say that we do not oppose it insofar as it is properly understood: as the process of reappropriation of an intellectual tradition, as well as the process of going beyond it” (Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001, ix). Hall substantially agrees with them in this respect: “‘post’ means, for me, going on thinking on the ground of a set of established problems, a problematic. . . . So I am, only in that sense, a post-marxist and a post-structuralist, because those are the two discourses I feel most constantly engaged with” (Hall 1986c, 58-59). The second point made by Laclau and Mouffe in the preface is, instead, more substantial, for it sheds light on the precise political conditions for this reappropriation of Marxism beyond itself. According to them, the process by which such a reappropriation takes place “cannot be conceived just as an *internal* history of Marxism” (Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001, ix). As they observe, “many social antagonisms, many issues which are crucial to the understanding of contemporary societies, belong to fields of discursivity which are *external* to Marxism, and cannot be reconceptualized in terms of Marxist categories—given, especially, that their very presence is what puts Marxism as a closed theoretical system into question” (ix-x). Think of queer theory and politics: this is one such field *external* to Marxism, which exercises a certain pressure on its theoretical and political categories. For Laclau and Mouffe, it is Gramsci’s broadening of Marxist analysis that produced an unprecedented *permeability* of Marxism to political demands and modes of struggle that are, in principle, external to it. In this sense, both Marxism in general and Gramsci more specifically must be read beyond themselves, yet Gramsci is assigned a privileged position in the process, for he already laid the ground, *within* Marxism, for such an eccentric reappropriation to take place.

25. Hall makes this point while discussing the concept of “money”: “Take money. It exists before banks, before capital. If we use the term, ‘money,’ to refer to this relatively simple relation, we use a concept which . . . is still abstract and simple: less concrete than the concept of ‘money’ under commodity production. As ‘money’ becomes more developed so our concept of it will tend to become more ‘concrete’” (Hall [1974] 2003, 133).
26. This and other passages suggest that Gramsci to some extent anticipated Michel Foucault’s conceptualizations of disciplinary

power and biopolitics in relation to traditional sovereign power (Foucault [1976] 1978; [1997] 2003; [2004] 2007). I return to Foucault later in this chapter and more extensively in chapter 3.

27. Anderson's primary preoccupation in this passage is to oppose reformist readings of Gramsci. He writes: "historically, and this is the most essential point of all, the development of any revolutionary crisis necessarily displaces the dominance within the bourgeois power structure from ideology to violence. Coercion becomes both *determinant and dominant* in the supreme crisis, and the army inevitably occupies the front of the stage in any class struggle against the prospect of a real inauguration of socialism" (Anderson 1977, 44).
28. In the same essay, Hall also observes that while the concept emerged in relation to Poulantzas' work, the *idea* of authoritarian populism first surfaced in the analysis carried out by himself and his colleagues in *Policing the Crisis* (1978), which I discuss later in this chapter.
29. See Marx's use of ideology in *The German Ideology* (Marx and Engels [1845-1846] 1968).
30. Marx's passage is quoted in Hall (1986b, 35).
31. To be precise, while Larraín states that the same "neutral" understanding of ideology is shared by Laclau and Hall, he nonetheless registers that the latter, unlike the former, did delve into Marx's use of the concept. Yet Larraín criticizes precisely the fact that this exploration of Marx's use of ideology did not prevent Hall from embracing what he terms a "neutral" version of the concept. Importantly, his concern is not only theoretical but also political: "it is not enough to be able to account for the successful way in which Thatcherite ideology has been able to articulate the interests of a wide variety of groups and sections of British society, it is necessary to show, critically, its shortcomings and inadequacies" (Larraín 1991, 21). That is, a "neutral" version of ideology must be at least *complemented* with the "negative" approach. Otherwise, "the analysis could easily become a political celebration of the achievements of Thatcherism" (21). On this point, Larraín echoes the concerns already articulated by Jessop *et al.*
32. What interests me is neither to comment on Laclau's reading of Peronism nor to discuss Laclau's theory of populism as a whole. The key element, here, is his claim that ideological elements do not possess a necessary class belonging, for this is what Hall found most relevant in *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*.

33. In this chapter, I refer to gay and lesbian politics rather than LGBT or LGBTQ politics to reflect the concrete political subject that the authors discussed had in mind in the 1980s.
34. A satisfactory discussion of Laclau and Mouffe's embracing of the discursive turn, hence of their poststructuralist reading of Gramsci, is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, some clarifications are due. Their notion of "discourse" draws on Michel Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* ([1969] 1972) and Jacques Derrida's *Writing and Difference* ([1967] 1978). From the former, Laclau and Mouffe borrow the intuition that a discourse acquires its consistency not by reference to a principle external to it, but through a principle immanent to the discursive formation itself: a "regularity in dispersion." Laclau and Mouffe appropriate this idea in order to argue that each element entering a hegemonic relation derives its identity not by an external principle, but exclusively by its relational position vis-à-vis the other elements to which it gets articulated (Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001, 105-106). However, they lament that Foucault maintained a distinction, which they deem "inconsistent," between discursive and non-discursive practices (107). It is Derrida's deconstruction of structuralism that allows Laclau and Mouffe to leave behind that distinction. According to Saussure's structural linguistics, the structure of language is firmly organized by the immanent relations among its elements (see Saussure [1916] 1959). This already constitutes an approximation to Laclau and Mouffe's conception of discourse, for the center of the structure (its principle of organization) is located, by Saussure, within the structure itself. However, Derrida observes that, while "the center of a structure permits the play of its elements inside the total form," it also "closes off the play which it opens up and makes possible. As center, it is the point at which the substitution of contents, elements, or terms is no longer possible" (Derrida [1967] 1978, 279). Therefore, thinking in terms of a structure provided with its own organizing center would lead one to consider discursive formations as fully constituted wholes. But, in Laclau and Mouffe's terms, for articulatory practices to be continuously operative in a social formation (that is, for hegemonic struggle to take place), a discursive formation must always necessarily fail to establish itself as a fully closed totality. Thus, they follow Derrida both in dispensing with any

notion of a structuring center and in affirming that *everything becomes discourse*, “provided we can agree on this word—that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely” (280). Consequently, for Laclau and Mouffe, the social formation must be understood as a discursive totality that always necessarily fails to establish itself as a closed whole, because its attempts at fully constituting itself are constantly interrupted *not* by extra-discursive elements, but by other discourses, other attempts to fix meaning where meaning is impossible to fix.

35. This friction over the status of the discursive and the non-discursive can be traced, in fact, to Hall’s broader skepticism toward Laclau and Mouffe’s theoretical practice. This is well illustrated by Hall’s following comment: “Theoretically, perhaps, they are much more consistent than I am. Logically, once you’ve opened the gate, it’s reasonable to go through it and see what the world looks like on the other side. But I think that that often becomes its own kind of reductionism. I would say that the fully discursive position is a reductionism upward, rather than a reductionism downward, as economism was” (Hall 1986c, 57).
36. In this passage, Hall quotes from the *Prison Notebooks* (Gramsci [1929-1935] 1971, 324).
37. Hall describes the compromise as follows: “The Right—marginalizing their more reactionary and free-market elements—settled for the welfare state, comprehensive education, the Keynesian management of economic policy, and the commitment to full employment as the terms of peaceful compromise between capital and labor. In return, the Left accepted to work broadly within the terms of a modified capitalism and within the Western bloc sphere of strategic influence. Despite the many real differences of emphasis . . . the situation was characterized by a profound, underlying consensus or compromise on the fundamental social and economic framework within which conflicts were, for the moment, ‘settled’ or contained” (Hall 1988c, 36).
38. The phrase “authoritarian populism” appears at least once already in *Policing the Crisis*, even if this earlier text does not explicitly theorize the new conjuncture in those terms: “[A] point, not sufficiently acknowledged, is the mobilising power of the recruitment of ‘the

law' in winning over the silent majority to a definition of the crisis which regularly and routinely underpins a more authoritarian form of the state. The interposition of the law directly into class relations may have destroyed something of its effective neutral 'cover.' But it also had the opposite effect: of making it more legitimate for 'public opinion' to be actively recruited in an open and explicit fashion in favour of 'the strong state.' Anyone who doubts that may tune in to any 'grass-roots' phone-in radio programme at random, and catch the ebb and flow of authoritarian populism in defence of *social discipline*" (Hall *et al.* 1978, 304-305).

39. Indeed, *Policing the Crisis* already makes scattered references to Thatcher herself. Commenting on the general rise of authoritarianism in the early 1970s from the vantage point of the end of the decade, for instance, Hall *et al.* observe: "What lends this steady drift into an active authoritarian 'social gospel' its political muscle is the emergence, for the first time since the war, of an organised and articulate fraction of the radical right within the leadership of the Conservative Party itself. With the election of Mrs Thatcher and her entourage, this fraction no longer belongs to the Tory fringes and back-benches. It has been installed at its intellectual and political centre" (Hall *et al.* 1978, 315).
40. In fact, according to Hall *et al.*, none of the apparatuses centrally involved in the moral panic (the media, the police, and the judiciary) simply *reacted* to mugging. To different degrees and in different ways, all of them contributed to amplify and structure the panic, hence to *produce* mugging as a social phenomenon. However, by taking action against mugging and producing a discourse about it even before the moral panic emerged as such, the police are more clearly implicated in the production of mugging than the media or the courts.
41. As Hall *et al.* point out, it is precisely the formal independence of the media that turns them into a terrain of ideological struggle. Indeed, similarly to how the relative autonomy of the state allows the dominant class to negotiate different class interests in order to consolidate and exercise hegemony, the formal independence of the media makes space for the articulation of conflicting points of view (despite significant constraints). The result is "to make the 'reproduction of the dominant ideologies' a problematic and contradictory process, and thus to recreate the arena of signification as a field of ideological

struggle” (Hall *et al.* 1978, 220).

42. It is worth mentioning, as a further qualification of this argument, that according to Hall *et al.* the articulation between mugging and race was never made fully explicit during the moral panic of 1972-73. According to their analysis, the link fully becomes a matter of popular and political common sense only later, when the problem of mugging resurfaces in 1974 after a period of silence (Hall *et al.* 1978, 327-328). This does not mean, however, that race does not play a central role in the structuring of the mugging phenomenon from the very beginning.
43. For one of Hall’s most sophisticated analysis of the articulation between race and class, which resists *both* economism *and* culturalism, see “Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance” (1980). The concrete reference of this essay is the postcolonial South African social formation.
44. In fact, Hall *et al.* remark, in the same sentence, that “for those sectors still at work the tempo of militancy has also considerably advanced” (Hall *et al.* 1978, 356). And few pages earlier they observe: “In recent years . . . black workers, far from being confined to the backwaters of British industry, have constituted a significant sector of its ‘vanguard’; and they have been substantially involved in some of the major industrial disputes” (342). However, the core of their analysis in this last chapter of *Policing the Crisis* focuses on the processes of political and ideological formation taking root among the wageless in black communities, in particular unemployed youth.
45. Smith does not discuss the mugging panic. Her analysis of racism in *New Right Discourse on Race and Sexuality* primarily focuses on the earlier phenomenon of Powellism. Moreover, she makes only scattered references to the notion of “panic” itself (A. Smith 1994, 22, 59, 123, 149-150, 159, 168, 216). However, her analysis of Section 28, heavily influenced by Hall’s work, can be understood in line with the reconceptualization of the concept of “moral panic” offered in *Policing the Crisis*.
46. That the moral panic about homosexuality in 1987-88 resembles panics about black immigration and racialized crime in the 1960s and 1970s *does not mean* that racism is a matter of the past, neither at the time of Smith’s writing nor today. Smith herself makes the opposite point: “British political scientists readily admit that Enoch Powell’s racist campaign against black immigration played an important role

in British politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s. But it is generally assumed that as the last major crisis around a new ‘wave’ of black immigration wound down in 1972—the crisis about the entry of Ugandan Asians [which followed the earlier crisis involving Kenyan Asians]—black immigration and race more or less disappeared from the political agenda. . . . I want to offer a radically different story” (A. Smith 1994, 5). Indeed, according to Smith, the fact that race did not resurface between the mid-1970s and the late 1980s in the form of moral panics does not mean that it did not play a pivotal role in the project of Thatcherism: “While it is true that black immigration legislation never regained a prominent position on the British political agenda after the mid-1970s, and while it is true that Powell himself was confined to the parliamentary back benches after committing various strategic blunders in 1974, the Powellian legacy of guilt-free British nationalism—constructed through the exclusion of black otherness—became a powerful resource for Thatcherism” (7).

47. As Smith argues, on the one hand, the movement of the middle class to the suburbs in post-war times produced a concentration of Labour voters in the urban centers. On the other hand, the expansion of the welfare state assigned to local authorities the function of distributing the new services available (A. Smith 1994, 15).
48. Smith argues that, in order to manufacture the idea that a campaign for the promotion of homosexuality by local governments *did exist* in the first place, the supporters of Section 28 engaged in a careful production of “evidence” (A. Smith 1994, 191-194). While they could certainly rely on the real backing granted by some local governments, such as the GLC, to lesbian and gay political formations, they grounded their attack on a mixing of texts and policies that in fact had little to do with one another. An instance of this is the official report presented at the House of Commons on March 8, 1987 by Jill Knight, one of the Conservative Members of Parliament who presided over the passing of Section 28: “At one point, Knight quotes a passage from a sex-education text which she incorrectly claims to have been ‘promulgated by a local council’; she then directly proceeds to situate her ‘evidence’ by quoting passages from a radical critique of the family by the Gay Liberation Front written in 1971” (192). On the one hand, as Smith observes, this construction of a seamless whole out of disparate texts and policies focuses on local government “as

if the local councils invented these [lesbian and gay] organizations to brainwash teenagers, when such organizing actually originated in the lesbian and gay community” (193). On the other hand, what she terms the “evidence game” came to organize *both camps* of the debate. Indeed, most of those opposing Section 28—particularly within Labour—made more efforts to distance the party from its associations with an alleged campaign to promote homosexuality than defending the progressive politics characterizing local councils such as the GLC (194-195). Hall’s and Laclau and Mouffe’s critique of the Left in “New Times”—a critique of its reluctance to articulate the identity politics of the new social movements—is qualified by Smith, in the particular context of this moral panic, with reference to the way in which Thatcherism was able to structure the very terms of the debate: as a struggle over truth and evidence.

49. Smith draws, instead, on Gilroy’s analysis of the Conservative Party’s mobilization of the figure of the “black entrepreneur” (A. Smith 1994, 21; Gilroy 1987, 57-59).
50. Foucault makes several incursions throughout this dissertation, especially in chapter 3. Indeed, his work constitutes a necessary reference point for any attempt to bring a theory of hegemony into contemporary queer debates. However, this dissertation does not offer a sustained account of the relation between Gramsci and Foucault, between the theory of hegemony and the theory of biopolitics. In fact, a thorough discussion of this relation has yet to fully take place also outside the field of queer theory, even as many critics draw on both Gramsci and Foucault without thematizing the possible frictions between them. For a good critical overview of some *explicit* efforts to identify convergences between the two authors, see Mark Olssen, “Foucault and Gramsci: Is There a Basis for Convergence?” (1999). A recent collective attempt to bring Gramsci and Foucault into closer dialogue with each other is the volume edited by David Kreps, titled *Gramsci and Foucault: A Reassessment* (2016).
51. Bertsch correctly remarks: “Foucault shouldn’t take all the blame for the way his work was received. But it should make us more dubious of his thesis. Even if the idea of the specific intellectual has proven useful in local struggles, we still must confront the fact that specific intellectuals who meet with success in their work have a way of metamorphosing into universal intellectuals” (Bertsch 2000).

52. In chapter 3, I make this argument about Jasbir K. Puar's (2007) work on homonationalism and Joseph A. Massad's (2007) critique of sexual imperialism.
53. I got to know myself the story of LGSM through the recent movie. To be more precise, after its release a discussion on the experience of the group was organized in Bologna, Italy, by the queer collective Laboratorio Smaschieramenti. I wish to thank Serena Bassi, who was invited that night to organize a discussion and who pointed me at some of the relevant literature to understand the story of LGSM.
54. Bill Schwarz and Alan Fountain (1985) highlight an interesting ambiguity in the NUM's own relation to the problem of media reporting. Indeed, they observe that Scargill both attacked the media and, at the same time, tried to occupy the media space whenever possible to the advantage of the union and the strike. In their view, this ambiguity, that his detractors never missed, signals a *real* question: "Without doubt the NUM has been absolutely correct in seeing the media as central, on occasions decisively so, in determining the balance of forces between the strikers and those ranged against them. . . . However to over-emphasize it is to risk losing a wider battle. Whilst people in the heat of struggle can see the media as grotesque and interfering, this is far from so for those who have never directly experienced the vindictiveness of its attacks. For them the argument that the media is simply a lie machine, producing a distortion after another, often appears unconvincing and biased in its own turn. In addition, such a line does little to assist in the battle for determining *how* the strike is represented day-by-day—it obstructs attempts to utilise whatever openings for sympathetic coverage are available" (124). Hence, they push this argument further, echoing in fact Hall's critical understanding of ideology: "The press may be a significant organizer of popular beliefs in selecting, categorizing and contextualising information so as to make sense of the world for its readers, but it does not create these ideas from the abstract" (125). For them, at stake is not simply a media conspiracy, but an articulation of ideologies and media practices that produces an apparatus structurally incapable of "neutral" reporting: "What is 'the news'? . . . Every act in constituting a news item, in deciding in which order the items should be placed and in what accent the items are read, involves the adoption of a position. The fact that the vast

majority of television makers do not accept this is a critical aspect of maintaining the system's conservatism" (132).

55. As a partial corrective to this polarization, I shall note that the analogies between the two groups and the modes of their oppression under Thatcherism played a role also within the lesbian and gay community itself. As LGSM member Rosie Leach commented during an interview, "I think in some ways it's the press and the police that have made the link for a lot of gay people, because they see what happens to them all the time, getting hassled and getting called old names in the newspapers and all that" (Flynn, Goldsmith, and Sutcliffe 1985, 42). However, the contrary is less true. A working-class positioning was not significantly mobilized by LGSM in the encounter with the miners.
56. It is worth noticing that such a politics of class conflict within the lesbian and gay community in London—particularly within the context of organizing support for the miners—also entailed, at least potentially, a questioning of the center-periphery divide within Britain and its impact on the spatial organization of gay and lesbian life. As Mike Jackson explained during an interview: "we're a London-based group, and yet actually there's no mining community near London. The nearest one is 80 miles away, in Kent. But an awful lot of people in our support group are actually from outside London, originally. And, tell me if I've got this wrong, but, certainly myself, and I suspect an awful lot of the others, the reason we ended up in London was because life was easier to be gay in London than it was outside. . . . I think that's really sad, that we have to come and live in this little ghetto. And if there's one thing I'd like to see the strike do, for example in Dulais, if nowhere else, is for young gay kids to be able to grow up there..." (Flynn, Goldsmith, and Sutcliffe 1985, 45).
57. This point is developed further in chapter 2, where I discuss at length the key intervention of queer of color critique in contemporary queer theory and politics.
58. Partly, this is also the case. For instance, Kelliher comments that, despite LGSM's commitment to *also* fight homophobia by organizing explicitly as lesbians and gays, the group's reliance on the rhetoric of supporting "the miners and their families" in fact "risked repeating the same exclusions that they hoped to ultimately undermine" (Kelliher 2014, 251).

## Chapter Two

1. Following Hall's analysis of Thatcherism, neoliberalism is understood here not just as a set of economic policies, but as a complex of economic, political, and ideological practices. Thus, I make reference to a "neoliberal bloc" in order to signal that economic neoliberalization is always accompanied by a struggle for *hegemony* conducted on the political and ideological terrains. This reading draws on Hall's analysis of Thatcherism as much as on Duggan's work. For instance, she writes: "If neoliberalism has been the continuing foundation for pro-business activism in the U.S. since the 1970s, that activism has also engaged a shifting array of political/cultural issues and constituencies in order to gain power and legitimacy. . . . In order to facilitate the flow of money up the economic hierarchy, neoliberal politicians have constructed complex and shifting alliances, issue by issue and location by location—always in contexts shaped by the meanings and effects of race, gender, sexuality, and other markers of difference. These alliances are not simply opportunistic, and the issues not merely epiphenomenal or secondary to the underlying reality of the more solid and real economic goals, but rather, the economic goals have been (must be) formulated *in terms of* the range of political and cultural meanings that shape the social body in a particular time and place" (Duggan 2003, xvi).
2. The concept of homonormativity recalls that of heteronormativity, introduced by Michael Warner in *Fear of a Queer Planet* (1993). Yet, as Duggan herself makes clear, the two concepts are not meant to be parallel: "there is no structure for gay life, no matter how conservative or normalizing, that might compare with the institutions promoting and sustaining heterosexual coupling" (Duggan 2003, 50, n15). Thus, homonormativity is conceptualized as a gay politics that *supplements* the institutions of heteronormativity, rather than equal or even replace them. It does so by privatizing sexuality and supporting the increasing shrinking of the public (both public democratic spaces and the public sector as such). Duggan's analysis of homonormativity first appeared in her essay "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism" (2002), but the subsequent incorporation of that analysis in *The Twilight of Equality?* helps better situate homonormativity within the broader

context of the construction of neoliberal hegemony in the United States. For a critical approach to Duggan's work that however does not engage with this broader framework, and interprets homonormativity primarily as the name for a regime of normalized homosexuality, see Mary Bernstein and Verta Taylor's introduction to their edited volume *The Marrying Kind? Debating Same-Sex Marriage within the Lesbian and Gay Movement* (2013).

3. Epistemologically, this gesture is typical of Butler's work: focusing on theoretical and political positions that are not directly exemplary of a problem, but rather reproduce it through the very structure of their arguments. Yet in this essay, her choice to criticize Fraser's work, rather than addressing any of the orthodox Marxist authors who are the real target of her critique, is also strategic. It is meant to avoid, in Butler's own words, "the pettier politics of who said what, and who said what back" (Butler 1997b, 265). Instead of engaging in such polemics, Butler tries to establish a conversation among closer theoretical and political allies—a move that Fraser seems not to entirely understand and that she deems "unfortunate" (Fraser 1997b, 279).
4. To be more precise, Fraser distinguishes between a "definitional" and a "functionalist" aspect of Butler's argument. In her view, Butler formulates a definitional argument when she calls for an expansion of the economic base so as to include in it the heteronormative regulation of sexuality that anchors the latter to the family as the site for the social reproduction of persons (Fraser 1997b, 283-285). It is this definitional argument that Fraser considers to be ahistorical, for Butler suggests that the anchoring of sexuality to the heteronormative family defines capitalism as such, rather than constituting one mode of regulation articulated to specific capitalist social formations. Then, Fraser observes, it is from this definitional argument that Butler's functionalist argument follows: "Here the claim is that the heteronormative regulation of sexuality is economic—not by definition, but because it is functional to the expansion of surplus value" (285). The difference between these two aspects of the same argument, which indeed strictly depend on one another, is not to be found in Butler's own essay.
5. Smith partly acknowledges this: "Butler also cites, with approval, highly problematic functionalist arguments in which the social is constructed as a closed organic system. . . . Like functionalism,

poststructuralism undermines the possibility of an autonomous, fully self-conscious, and instrumentalist subject that is prior to a given formation. A deconstructive approach cannot, however, be reconciled with functionalism's organicist and totalistic dimensions. Butler's text is fundamentally at odds with itself in this respect" (A. Smith 2001a, 108). This passage has the virtue of highlighting the common ground between functionalism and deconstruction, which makes their encounter in Butler's essay possible, if problematic, in the first place. However, a reflection on such a common ground is not to be found in Butler's essay itself, which shifts seamlessly from functionalism to deconstruction with no apparent awareness of the contradictions between the two.

6. For specific attempts to draw queer theory and Marxism together, see Rosemarie Hennessy, *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism* (2000); Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (2002); Kevin Floyd, *The Reification of Desire: Toward a Queer Marxism* (2009); Peter Drucker, *Warped: Gay Normality and Queer Anticapitalism* (2015); and Petrus Liu, *Queer Marxism in Two Chinas* (2015). For two good overviews of this theoretical moment, which also provide a mapping of the field, see Nat Raha, "Queer Marxism and the Task of Contemporary Queer Social Critique" (2014) and Gianfranco Rebutini, "Marxisme *queer*: approches matérialistes des identités sexuelles" (2016).
7. For two key texts of the Freudo-Marxist tradition, see Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* ([1933] 1970) and Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* ([1955] 1966). For a contemporary queer intervention that significantly reengages with Freudo-Marxism, and with the work of Italian gay militant and philosopher Mario Mieli, see James Penney, *After Queer Theory: The Limits of Sexual Politics* (2014).
8. Interestingly, Butler almost seems to acknowledge this possibility at the beginning of her essay: "But what if my rehearsal [of orthodox Marxist arguments against cultural and identity politics] involves a temporary identification with them, even as I myself participate in the cultural politics under attack? Is that temporary identification that I perform, the one that raises the question of whether I am involved in a parody of these positions, not precisely a moment in which, for better or worse, they become my position? It is, I would argue,

impossible to perform a convincing parody of an intellectual position without having a prior affiliation with what one parodies, without having and wanting an intimacy with the position one takes in or on as the object of parody” (Butler 1997b, 266).

9. Butler herself mentions processes of antagonism and cross-fertilization within the theoretical field, among forms of critical knowledge production that, like identity politics, she considers to be under attack by orthodox segments of the Left: “the politics of sexuality within African American studies; the politics of race within queer studies, within the study of class, within feminism; the question of misogyny within any of the above; the question of homophobia within feminism—to name but a few. This may seem to be precisely the tedium of identitarian struggles that a new, more inclusive Left hopes to transcend. And yet, for a politics of ‘inclusion’ to mean something other than the redomestication and resubordination of such differences, it will have to develop a sense of alliance in the course of a new form of conflictual encounter” (Butler 1997b, 269).
10. For another engagement with the debate between Butler and Fraser that insists on the lack of a theory of hegemony, see Jacinda Swanson, “Recognition and Redistribution: Rethinking Culture and the Economic” (2005).
11. Butler herself does mention Hall and the project of cultural studies at the very beginning of her essay. Here, she affirms that the attack on identity politics from an orthodox Marxist standpoint is accompanied by a similar criticism of the forms of critical knowledge populating, for nearly fifty years now, the intellectual scene of the Left. Thus, she mentions “an explicitly Marxist objection to the reduction of Marxist scholarship and activism to the study of culture, sometimes understood as the reduction of Marxism to cultural studies” (Butler 1997b, 265). And later, even more explicitly, she remarks that any reference “to an apparently stable distinction between material and cultural life marks the resurgence of a theoretical anachronism, one that discounts the contributions to Marxist theory since Althusser’s displacement of the base-superstructure model as well as various forms of cultural materialism (e.g., Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak)” (267-268). However, the field of cultural studies and its early reconceptualizations of hegemony, ideology, and the relation between base and superstructures are not subject to real theoretical engagement

- in “Merely Cultural.” In her response, Fraser does not notice Butler’s cursory reference to this intellectual trajectory.
12. I say “virtually” because Duggan does not reference Hall’s work on Thatcherism in her analysis of neoliberalism and its cultural and identity politics.
  13. See Hall’s account of his own positioning within the “first” New Left in his essay, titled “Life and Times of the First New Left” (2010).
  14. Rosemarie Hennessy suggests that even the Marxist and socialist gay formations that emerged within the gay liberation movement managed only loosely to situate an analysis of homosexual oppression within a Marxist framework. While acknowledging the value of those critical efforts, she writes: “Comprised of a loose network of collectives, journals, newsletters, study groups, conferences, and actions whose most intensive activity lasted only until the mid-seventies, the Gay Left represented a short-lived but vital willingness to make use of marxism as a critical framework to link sexual oppression to global capitalism. In fact, however, there were more gestures in this direction than there were developed theoretical explanations from which to forge a fundamentally anticapitalist activist politics” (Hennessy 2000, 45-46).
  15. For Duggan’s own analysis of the sex wars, see her earlier work with Nan D. Hunter, *Sex Wars: Sexual Dissent and Political Culture* (1995). See also Miranda Joseph’s account of the attack on the National Endowment of the Arts in the 1990s, in *Against the Romance of Community* (2002).
  16. The radicalization of the movement caused by the AIDS crisis constitutes, at least in part, a temporary suspension of this historical trajectory. Or, to put it differently, the political formations emerged in the context of the AIDS crisis helped maintaining during the 1980s a broader horizon of redistribution downward that was going to recede dramatically in the next decade. Duggan makes this point: “Occasionally, it all came together as it had in earlier times—the movement born to fight AIDS and HIV infection linked identity and civil rights politics with an encompassing vision of material and cultural equality, and drew upon the resources of activists, theorists, artists, and scientists to construct an imaginative range of political interventions during the 1980s” (Duggan 2003, xix).
  17. Additionally, Anna Marie Smith argues that the Responsibility and

Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) passed under Clinton's government, not only famously managed to "end the welfare as we know it," in Clinton's own words, but also turned it into "a series of severely disciplinary controls" (A. Smith 2001b, 310). In particular, the PRWORA targeted single mothers on welfare, the disproportionate majority of them women of color: depicting them as the ones responsible for their own poverty; prescribing that they must cooperate in tracking their children's biological father, whose child support payments would save public money; and channeling funds for abstinence education programs (312-313). In this way, Smith argues, the PRWORA worked hand in hand with the DOMA in reaffirming heteropatriarchal marriage as a norm, yet in the specific context of neoliberalization: "With the [PRWORA], a poor single mother is explicitly expected to marry her way out of poverty. . . . In this manner, patriarchal heterosexual marriage is more than a moral category; it is an institution that is supposed to replace the state's obligations towards the poor. The promotion of patriarchal heterosexual marriage—especially among the poor—is therefore integral to the post-welfare state regime" (315).

18. Additionally, the centrality of personal relationships to fundraising militates to preserve a white male leadership for the movement. Indeed, the funding practices that became key to U.S. large national organizations in the 1990s increasingly required a leadership capable of sharing racial and class affiliations with major donors. For a first-hand account of these dynamics, see Urvashi Vaid, *Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming of Gay Liberation* (1995), particularly chapter 8. Vaid, former Executive Director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), provides in that text an insider and self-critical perspective on the transformations of the movement discussed by Chasin. See also her *Irresistible Revolution: Confronting Race, Class and the Assumptions of LGBT Politics* (2012), for a more retrospective assessment of those transformations.
19. Since homonormativity is the name that Duggan gives to the sexual politics of neoliberalism in the twenty-first century—the "gay wing" of a nonredistributive multicultural politics of equality—it is also important not to fetishize the specific role played by politico-ideological formations such as LCR and IGF. The emergence of homonormativity in the late 1990s and early 2000s is the result of

two articulated trajectories: on the one hand, the incorporation of a rhetorical commitment to formal equality within the neoliberal bloc; on the other hand, the increasing ascendancy of neoliberal logics and forms of organizing within the LGBTQ movement. These are processes that affect wider segments of the movement and are not reducible to the operations of the explicitly neoliberal gay formations discussed so far. Although Duggan's privileged focus on IGF focuses the attention on the political and ideological work performed by the group, she acknowledges the broader reach of the problem—both in *The Twilight of Equality?* and in more recent interventions, where she questions the unilateral investment of most segments of the LGBTQ movement in the campaign for marriage equality (Kim and Duggan 2005; Duggan 2009; Duggan 2011/2012). These pieces also contain tactical suggestions that do not necessarily exclude gay marriage activism from the construction of a broad counter-hegemonic bloc in times of neoliberalism. In “Beyond Gay Marriage,” for example, Kim and Duggan begin by acknowledging both the increasing household diversity characterizing the United States today and the erosion of the welfare state carried out by neoliberal reforms. Hence, they comment: “For gay activists, and indeed for all progressive activists, it would be far more productive to stress support for household diversity—both cultural and economic support, recognition and resources for a changing population as it actually lives—than to focus solely on gay marriage. By treating gay marriage as one form of household recognition among others, progressives can generate a broad vision of social justice that resonates on many fronts” (Kim and Duggan 2005). In “(Re)Producing Social Justice After Neoliberalism,” Duggan takes a step further and proposes a recovery of the concept of “social reproduction” in order to ground the expansive alliance politics required to challenge both homonormativity and neoliberalism. However, it is worth noticing that in the same piece she suggests to replace “intersectionality” with “social reproduction”: “Perhaps a term like social reproduction can become expansive enough to illuminate the web of connections that is too flexible, shifting, complex and globally variable for the term intersectionality to capture” (Duggan 2009). Later in this chapter, I argue that intersectionality is key to the contemporary transformations of queer theory and LGBTQ politics in the face of homonormativity.

20. Duggan makes these points by discussing Wendy Brown's *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (1995).
21. I discuss Floyd's and Ferguson's analyses later in this chapter, and Puar's in chapter 3.
22. See Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976).
23. Moreover, although queer critiques of identity politics in times of homonormativity are primarily directed against *sexual* identity politics, the same critique is most commonly deployed today—in both critical theory and society at large—to dismiss the theory and politics of antiracism. Talking about the refusal to think critically about race within what he terms “establishmentarian queer theory,” Hiram Perez observes that such a refusal “habitually classifies almost any form of race studies as a retreat into identity politics” (Perez 2005, 171). Given the racial operations of homonormativity, any queer critique of identity politics explicitly designed to militate against the sexual politics of neoliberalism must at least attend to these convergences.
24. See also Peter Drucker, *Warped: Gay Normality and Queer Anticapitalism* (2015). I do not discuss Drucker's work because his engagement with Lukács' concepts of reification and totality heavily depends on, and reproduces, Hennessy's and Floyd's respective readings. Yet his intervention proves original in many other respects.
25. I focus on Hennessy's and Floyd's respective readings of Lukács because they well illustrate, especially through a comparison between the two, the challenges and gains of the contemporary “Marxist renaissance” in queer theory. Yet this does not mean that Lukács represents the only point of reference for either of the two. Hennessy deploys a very diverse conceptual apparatus in *Profit and Pleasure*, ranging from Marx and Engels to Gramsci, from materialist feminism to Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse, from Louis Althusser to Raymond Williams, from John D'Emilio to Wendy Brown. Her primary goal is not to build a comprehensive theoretical framework, but rather to draw insights from the vast Marxist tradition in order to question some of the assumptions that inform contemporary queer theory. The concept of reification, however, is particularly central to her project. Floyd, instead, offers a more consistent engagement with the Marxist tradition that goes from Lukács to Marcuse and Fredric

Jameson—a tradition that he supplements with insights drawn from regulation theory and David Harvey. Marcuse and Jameson are key to Floyd's reading of reification and totality, not only but also for having opened Lukács' conceptual apparatus to the emergence of the new social movements. Yet Lukács remains the main point of reference for Floyd as well as the author with whom he entertains the more sustained critical dialogue throughout *The Reification of Desire*.

26. Lukács' argument is not just informed by the Marxist thesis of the revolutionary historical task of the proletariat. He also observes, more concretely, that the *different way* in which reification affects the capitalist's and the worker's respective consciousness compels the latter, as opposed to the former, to negate the very process of reification and aspire to totality: "It is true: for the capitalist also there is the same doubling of personality, the same splitting up of man [*sic*] into an element of the movement of commodities and an (objective and impotent) observer of that movement. But for his consciousness it necessarily appears as an activity (albeit this activity is objectively an illusion), in which effects emanate from himself. This illusion blinds him to the true state of affairs, whereas the worker, who is denied the scope for such illusory activity, . . . is therefore forced into becoming the object of the process by which he is turned into a commodity and reduced to a mere quantity. But this very fact forces him to surpass the immediacy of his condition" (Lukács [1919-1923] 1971, 166).
27. See chapter 7 of *Bodies that Matter* (Butler 1993a).
28. Against this reduction, Hennessy asserts: "If identities and their referents are secured through overdetermined processes of class as well as gender, the constitutive inability of any identity to secure its referent or to capture what it names—whether that identity be woman, homosexual, heterosexual, or queer—is not the result of an instability inherent to signification but of an array of social contradictions, including relations of labor" (Hennessy 1994, 103). Or, as she puts it in *Profit and Pleasure*, "[a]gainst neo-idealists who claim ambivalence is the trace of an unrepresentable Real and neoculturalists who claim that ambivalence is the mark of the indeterminacy of ideology, signification, or discourse, I argue that the ambivalence of new, more flexible modes of identity—and sexual identity specifically—needs to be read in terms of its historical relation to the contradictory structures of capitalism" (Hennessy 2000, 34).

29. Hennessy explicitly mentions Sparks' analysis while offering her own critique of Hall.
30. I address the relationship between universalism and totality thinking later in this chapter, in the context of a discussion of intersectionality and queer of color critique.
31. Floyd's reference in this passage, next to Butler's theory of gender performativity, is the work of Leo Bersani, for instance in *Homos* (1995).
32. For Butler's appropriation of Althusser in the service of her theory of gender performativity, see her *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (1993a), in particular chapter 4.
33. Floyd focuses exclusively on performative masculinity, not femininity. Indeed, one of his arguments is that historicizing Butler's theory also reveals the lack of a perfect parallel between masculinity and femininity (Floyd 2009, 82).
34. Floyd leaves relatively open the question of whether Butler's theory is then able to describe exclusively the norms and experiences of gender emerging in this particular historical conjuncture—what his historicizing gesture suggests—or whether her theory can in fact aspire to a higher degree of generalization. This question becomes particularly crucial as Floyd conceptualizes masculinity as a citation of the previous norm of manhood eroded by Taylorism. Was manhood less performative than masculinity under Taylorism? Floyd himself discusses this problem (Floyd 2009, 90-94).
35. In his foundational essay "Capitalism and Gay Identity," D'Emilio offers a historical materialist analysis of the emergence of gay identity in the United States in relation to industrialization and to the spread of wage labor outside the family. Hence, he poses a key question: "How is it that capitalism, whose structure made possible the emergence of a gay identity and the creation of urban gay communities, appears unable to accept gay men and lesbians in its midst?" (D'Emilio 1983, 108). In his view, the answer is to be found in the "contradictory relationship of capitalism to the family," for the link between family and production weakened by industrialization was sutured at the ideological level by positing the family as a source of emotional security (108).
36. Hennessy makes this point by turning to Wendy Brown's *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (1995), which Duggan instead criticizes for reproducing a dismissal of identity

politics that adopts a pedagogical posture and for reducing the vast field of identity politics to its contemporary narrowest manifestations (Duggan 2003, 79-80).

37. A corollary to this, Floyd notes, is reification's tendency to idealize a prior phase of organic totality: "Reification's capacity for metaphysical explanation . . . is inseparable from its radically dehistoricizing capacity. . . . The concept of reification typically grasps capitalist development as a narrative of decline, for example. Lukács' formative use of it has been appropriately been accused of presuming some prior, harmonious integration of subject with object, some earlier moment of unproblematic, organic social unification" (Floyd 2009, 18).
38. Hall makes this point about ideology, which I discuss in chapter 1.
39. I have been privileging Floyd's rereading of Butler at the expense of his engagement with Foucault because it best illustrates Floyd's theoretical practice and also, importantly, because it helps me underline the differences between Floyd's and Hennessy's respective conceptualizations of reification.
40. See the foundational text of regulation theory by Michel Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation: The U.S. Experience* ([1976] 1979).
41. For example, the decoupling of body and knowledge effected by deskilling and scientific management and the concomitant emergence of a niche market targeting men cannot explain, alone, the *heterosexualized* reification of masculinity under Taylorism. Moreover, I mentioned earlier that Floyd reads the emergence of a gay subculture in the 1950s and 1960s, especially through the circulation of gay physique pictorials, as a working of the "weakness" of the new performative masculinity. This dialectical movement must be understood as mediated by ideological formations and state practices. Floyd draws the entire picture while discussing the social and political conditions in which that gay subculture took shape: "the vigorous state tactics in trying to preempt any genuine socialization of homosexuals—efforts to mitigate the circulation of these images, efforts like the routine police raids on gay bars—suggest that we might understand this marginal circuit, this collective labor of homosexualizing masculinity, to be not merely heterosexual masculinity's constitutive outside but a constitutive outside of a uniformity . . . of production and consumption, a provocation for the ongoing enforcement not only of a Cold War-era 'national security'

but of a Fordist mode of regulation” (Floyd 2009, 165).

42. It is worth quoting Ruskola at length on this matter: “I am not at all sanguine about the analytic distinction between acts and identities. Notoriously, the *Hardwick* opinion itself [through which the Supreme Court had sanctioned the constitutionality of anti-sodomy laws in 1986] exploited the unstable relationship between the two, as it opportunistically at various times both conflated and disaggregated ‘sodomy’ and ‘sodomites.’ Acts are always performed by actors who have identities, and identities are always consolidated in and through acts” (Ruskola 2005, 239-240).
43. Queer of color critique is not the only form of counter-hegemonic identity politics mobilized within LGBTQ formations in order to resist homonormativity. In “Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity” (2008), for example, Susan Stryker argues that, before its current circulation in queer theory debates, homonormativity was a term deployed by transgender activists since the early 1990s in order to contest the hegemony of sexual orientation (homosexuality) in LGBTQ politics in the United States. Hence, taking this historical insight as her starting point, and registering the marginalization of trans bodies and knowledges in LGBTQ formations, she writes at the end of the essay: “Homonormativity . . . is more than an accommodation to neoliberalism in its macropolitical manifestations. . . . [E]ven well-intentioned antihomonormative critical practices that take aim at neoliberalism can fall short of their goal when they fail to adequately account for the destabilizing, cross-cutting differences within sexual categories that transgender issues represent. Such critical practices can function in unintentionally homonormative ways that circumvent and circumscribe, rather than amplify, the radical potential of transgender phenomena to profoundly disturb the normative” (155). In this passage, Stryker draws attention to the exclusions reproduced by queer critical discourses that are articulated to resist homonormativity but nonetheless continue to privilege an emphasis on cisgender gays and lesbians at the expense of trans people, hence rearticulating themselves to what transgender activists in the 1990s already termed homonormativity. Yet Stryker does not merely call for inclusion. Rather, she posits that “transgender phenomena” *as such* have a specific potential to interrupt the regimes of normativity through which homonormativity itself takes shape,

therefore suggesting that trans bodies and knowledges must be at the forefront of queer critiques of homonormativity. Hence, we could say that her text constitutes an attempt to hegemonize trans issues within queer theories and politics in times of homonormativity—a struggle similar to the one conducted by queer of color critique around the color line. However, Stryker herself has recently pointed at the emergence of forms of “transnormativity.” During a 2014 interview about the contemporary challenges for transgender studies, for instance, she observes: “What is truly amazing to me, after having been out as trans for nearly a quarter century, is the extent to which it is now becoming possible for some trans people to access what I call ‘transnormative citizenship,’ while at the same time truly horrific life circumstances persist for other trans people. Race really does seem to be the dividing line that allows some trans people to be cultivated for life, invested in, recognized, and enfolded into the biopolitical state, while allowing others to be consigned to malignant neglect or lethal violence” (Stryker and Dierkes-Thrun 2014). Even as homonormativity remains an articulation far more consolidated and operative than transnormativity, Stryker suggests here that race, rather than gender and its nonconformities, constitutes the main terrain of antagonism at the time of such new normativities.

44. See, for example, Julien’s film *Looking for Langston* (1989).
45. For Julien’s and Mercer’s own reading of the dynamics discussed by Hall, see their essay, titled “De Margin and De Centre” ([1988] 1996).
46. This difference between the time of Hall’s writing and our times does not make Hall’s reading less relevant. On the contrary, as I argue in the first chapter, the fact that Hall thought through the *tensions* between Marxism and identity politics makes his work worth recovering today, in the context of a “Marxist renaissance” in queer theory.
47. I must note the ambiguity between an endorsement of intersectionality and a critique of identity politics by many of the authors I discuss in this chapter, Floyd and Ferguson among them. This ambiguity proceeds from the fact that intersectionality is often regarded as a critique of identity politics. As I have argued, instead, intersectionality can be understood (and was understood, in many of its earlier formulations) as a form of identity politics.
48. For two recent queer interventions that establish a dialogue with Marxism by explicitly reengaging the question of universalism, see

James Penney, *After Queer Theory: The Limits of Sexual Politics* (2014) and Madhavi Menon, *Indifference to Difference: On Queer Universalism* (2015). Since Penney recovers, more specifically, the conceptual apparatus of Freudo-Marxism, his work gestures toward universalism yet also reestablishes a rather anachronistic privileging of sexual difference over other differences, in line with the traditional focus of psychoanalysis.

49. Consider, as another example, Eng's instructive analysis of *Lawrence v. Texas* in *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy* (2010). Here, Eng proposes to understand the emergence of homonormativity—what he terms “queer liberalism”—through the lens of a queer diasporic epistemology focused on the intersections between sexuality and race. In his analysis of the case, he points out that what led to the arrest of John Lawrence and Tyron Garner was *not* just an instance of gay conjugal intimacy arbitrarily interrupted by the police forces. In fact, that night Lawrence was hosting at his place a friend, Robert Eubanks, together with his date, Garner. Yet, allegedly irritated by the flirt going on between Lawrence and Garner, Eubanks called the police and reported “a nigger going crazy with a gun,” referring to African American Garner. This is what led the police to intervene and subsequently to charge Lawrence and Garner with consensual sodomy. As Eng comments, not only this one-night triangle (no matter the actual relationships existing between the three men) “renders queer liberalism’s idealization of conjugal domesticity especially ironic” (35); most importantly, it is the forgotten racial element that troubles any celebratory account of *Lawrence v. Texas*: “It is this enduring and unresolved history of whiteness, private property, and black racial trespass that provides the material and ideological background through which the queer liberalism of *Lawrence* emerges” (36). Therefore, Eng writes: “While race is not the doctrinal issue in *Lawrence*, I contend that it should be central to our thinking about the case politically and socially” (25). In his view, race must be placed, more broadly, at the center of contemporary queer analyses—it must be hegemonized, in my own terms—not just because a focus on race can provide us with a more *comprehensive* picture of the operations of homonormativity and neoliberalism, but because the very emergence of homonormativity “depends upon a constitutive forgetting of race” (36).

50. I read Muñoz's concept by emphasizing its theoretical and political aspects, yet this does not do entire justice to his primary focus on art and performance practices. This elusion tends to downplay, among other things, the disciplinary aspect of his intervention. For, as he states, his theorization of disidentification through queer of color performances is meant to be "a contribution to the formation of a queer performance-studies lens" (Muñoz 1999, xiv).
51. Hennessy herself, who writes after Muñoz, acknowledges the different nature of their respective projects: "This is a disidentification of a different order than Muñoz's—a disidentification that shifts the ground for knowing our desires and identifications, and the horizon for revamping them for collective struggle, from capitalism's inside to its outside—the space of unmet needs" (Hennessy 2000, 207). So, while for Hennessy a queer collective subject must negate the reification of identity and articulate an aspiration to totality that takes as its starting point a broad understanding of human desires and needs, Muñoz reads a plethora of queer of color practices that work through identities, throw them into question, but never abandon them as sites of both subjective and political articulation. The difference between the two may be, perhaps, a matter of emphasis. Yet for the project of this dissertation, which investigates among other things the relationship between identity politics and the politics of hegemony, that difference is key.
52. Muñoz makes reference to Duggan's work in progress (Muñoz 1999, xii), for her analysis of homonormativity was not published yet at the time of the publication of *Disidentifications*.
53. In *Disidentifications*, Muñoz makes reference to diverse traditions of Marxist thought, from Hall's reading of Gramsci in the 1980s to the workerism of C. L. R. James in *The Future in the Present* (1977). James makes his appearance at the end of Muñoz's text. Here, Muñoz draws on James' call to identify the instances of socialist society already at work in the present in order to conceptualize queer of color performances as mapping possible futures. This allows him to free such performances from what he terms the "burden of liveness" and to insist "on the minoritarian subject's status as a world-historical entity" (Muñoz 1999, 198). Yet *Disidentifications* is not a Marxist or historical materialist text. For a more consistent engagement with Marxism, see Muñoz's work on Ernst Bloch in his more recent

*Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009).

54. As I discussed, Floyd does engage with regulation theory in order to conceptualize the historically specific mediations of politico-ideological practices. Yet these are conceptualized, indeed, as *mediations* of the more fundamental process of reification. His engagement with regulation theory remains mostly supplementary.
55. The figure of the prostitute in Marx and that of the transgendered mulatta in Bentzen are brought even closer by the fact that, as Ferguson notices, the sexual pathologization of the working class coincided with its racialization: “Conflating the prostitute with the British working class inspired racial mythologies about the supposedly abnormal reproductive capacities and outcomes of that class. One tale suggested that the bodies of British working-class women could produce races heretofore unforeseen” (Ferguson 2004, 9). For the concomitant racialization and sexualization of the working class in nineteenth-century Britain, see the pioneering work of Anne McClintock in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (1995).
56. Ferguson discusses the role of both the female head and the queer in Wright’s black nationalist ideology especially through a reading of his novel *Native Son* ([1940] 1991). But the problem of the female-headed household also emerges from Wright’s own memories: “Wright understood social disorganization as a feminizing process that disrupted African American gender and sexual integrity. One of the signal disorganizing moments came when Wright’s father deserted the family, leaving his mother as the head. It was in the midst of the father’s absence that Wright had his first intense bout with hunger” (Ferguson 2004, 46). Ferguson recovers this memory from Wright’s autobiography *Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth* (1945).
57. See Combahee River Collective, “Combahee River Collective Statement” ([1977] 1983); Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (1984); and Barbara Smith, “Toward a Black Feminist Criticism” (1994). Smith’s work is particularly central to Ferguson’s analysis because of her “lesbian reading” of Toni Morrison’s *Sula* (1973). Ferguson discusses such a reading of Morrison precisely as the articulation of a lesbian standpoint that however participates in the expansion of the nonheteronormative through intersectionality. For instance, Smith writes: “Despite the apparent heterosexuality of

the female characters, I discovered in re-reading *Sula* that it works as a lesbian novel not only because of the passionate friendship between Sula and Nel, but because of Morrison's consistently critical stance toward the heterosexual institution of male/female relationships, marriage and the family. Consciously or not, Morrison's work poses both lesbian and feminist questions about black women's autonomy and their impact upon each other's lives" (Smith, quoted in Ferguson 2004, 127).

58. Ferguson is as unforgiving as his critique as to point out elements of heteropatriarchy in the work of BPP leader Huey P. Newton, yet without mentioning the speech Newton delivered in New York on August 15, 1970, titled "A Letter to the Revolutionary Brothers and Sisters About The Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements." The speech opened as follows: "During the past few years strong movements have developed among women and among homosexuals seeking their liberation. There has been some uncertainty about how to relate to these movements. Whatever your personal opinions and your insecurities about homosexuality and the various liberation movements among homosexuals and women (and I speak of the homosexuals and women as oppressed groups), we should try to unite with them in a revolutionary fashion. I say 'whatever your insecurities are' because as we very well know, sometimes our first instinct is to want to hit a homosexual in the mouth, and want a woman to be quiet. We want to hit a homosexual in the mouth because we are afraid that we might be homosexual; and we want to hit the women or shut her up because we are afraid that she might castrate us, or take the nuts that we might not have to start with" (Newton 1970).
59. Ferguson does not theorize about the present in *Aberrations in Black*, yet he offers precious insights. As he mentions, the pathologization of the female-headed household and of other African American nonheteronormative formations in state, sociological, and revolutionary discourses alike has also sustained the ideological articulation of neoliberalism from the 1970s onward. Indeed, the figure of the "welfare queer" has been central to that articulation in the United States (Ferguson 2004, 124-125). Hence, building on his reading of African American gender and sexual heterogeneity throughout the twentieth century, on his recovery of the struggle

conducted by women of color and black lesbian feminists in the 1970s and 1980s, and on a brief discussion of the role played by heteropatriarchal sexual regulation among populations of color in times of neoliberalism, Ferguson concludes his analysis with a brief note on the contemporary conjuncture: “In this historic moment, probably more than any other, oppositional coalitions have to be grounded in nonnormative racial difference. We must look to the differentiated histories of women of color and queer of color critical formations to aid us in this enterprise” (137). As this passage makes clear, his insistence on women of color and black lesbian feminists’ disidentification with black revolutionary ideologies is not meant to deemphasize the question of the color line. On the contrary, it suggests that nonheteronormative racial difference must be located at the center of any counter-hegemonic bloc that is to emerge from the intersection of multiple identity political formations.

60. Ferguson himself offers a queer of color critique of homonormativity in an essay titled “Race-ing Homonormativity: Citizenship, Sociology, and Gay Identity” (2005). Here, not only but also through a reading of Marx’s essay “On the Jewish Question” ([1844] 1972), he reads the homonormative subject’s access to citizenship and racial privilege as conditioned on the privatization of the sexual.
61. A similar convergence between homonormativity, neoliberal spatial politics, and the disciplining of queer of color formations emerges from Manalansan’s analysis, in the same essay, of the transformations of Christopher Street (Manalansan 2005, 49-52). Here, the Christopher Street piers—once a space of cruising and socializing, especially for queers of color—have now disappeared in favor of manicured parks and new residential buildings. While Manalansan’s queer of color informants feel that the space is no longer their own, as they are in fact prevented from getting together in the street and nearby the new buildings by an increased police activity, real estate agencies advertise the area to the more affluent segments of the gay population. Published in gay mainstream newspaper *Gay City News*, the following ad promotes a new building, The Pier: “The Pier stands as the newest landmark to living on the water. Reserved for the few . . . the resident’s view is majestic. . . . A statement of status and choice, The Pier offers a variety of luxuries and homes melded in contemporary architecture the essence of function” (*Gay City News*, quoted in Manalansan 2005, 51).

62. This both points at the hegemonization of the color line in times of homonormativity and suggests a danger of this process: to restrict the relevance of race for queer theory exclusively to the contemporary conjuncture. Indeed, Ferguson's queer of color analysis of urban industrialization in the early twentieth century in the United States has no impact on Floyd's reading of the same time and place.
63. I focus on the context of the "war on terror" in chapter 3, while discussing Jasbir K. Puar's (2007) critique of "homonationalism."
64. Floyd's quote is from David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (2005, 201).
65. Ferguson makes reference to Hall's essay "Assembling the 1980s: The Deluge and After" (2005). Although in *Aberrations in Black* Ferguson does not engage with Hall's work, Amy Villarejo notices the proximity between their respective intellectual practices: "Ferguson's project, forging queer of color analysis that bridges the social sciences and the humanities (sociology and literature), displays the kind of thinking that some of the early work of British cultural studies did, particularly in its sense of unrelenting urgency and in the transformations it puts into play of academic categories (cultural studies, queer studies, critical race studies, queer of color critique). Like some critiques of that initial Birmingham Centre work, Ferguson also seeks to unmask the normative assumptions of Marxist traditions while disavowing the ideology of transparency of which such unmasking would seem to be an example" (Villarejo 2005, 71).
66. Information about Rhodes Must Fall is available on the Facebook page of the movement: <https://www.facebook.com/RhodesMustFall/> (accessed January 15, 2017).
67. Among other initiatives, UoC organized a Decolonial School that was, in fact, a school of intersectional critique. The collective describes the school as follows: "The program is meant for those who are interested in being part of social movements, activism and want to participate in the ongoing global struggle that aims to decolonize not just the University, but also the imperialist white-supremacist capitalist ableist hetero-patriarchy." The program of the school is available at: <http://universityofcolour.com/post/138621008963/edit-open-registration-for-the-first-semester-of> (accessed January 15, 2017).
68. The Diversity Commission is part of a broader Democratization and Decentralization Commission established at the University of Amsterdam in the wake of the 2015 occupation. See the webpage of

the broader Commission (in Dutch): <http://commissiedd.nl/> (accessed January 15, 2017). The final report of the Diversity Commission, submitted on October 12, 2016, is available at: <http://commissiedd.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/1.-Diversity-Commission-Report.pdf> (accessed January 15, 2017).

69. Wekker was a professor in the Graduate Gender Programme at Utrecht University, the Netherlands, when I enrolled in the master program of Gender and Ethnicity. Although she was never my teacher, I got to know her outside the university. I conducted an interview with her on April 30, 2015 at her house in Amsterdam. Information about her life and quotes by her that are not referenced in the text proceed from the material of that interview. Traces of Wekker's life narrative and of her involvements in different intellectual and political projects can be found, in English, throughout the pages of her most recent book, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (2016). See also the entry on her in the online encyclopedia of Afro-European studies, written by Betta Pesole: <http://www.encyclopediaofafro-european-studies.eu/encyclopedia/gloria-wekker/> (accessed January 15, 2017).
70. During her interview with me, Wekker remembers the incident as taking place in 1979, rather than 1983, and focuses on the figure of black feminist Julia de Lima. According to Wekker's memory, it was de Lima who stepped forward and read a statement criticizing the program of the school and accusing the white feminist movement of racism. Although de Lima was indeed present at the Winter School in 1983, it was actually Troetje Loewenthal who read that famous speech. The latter was subsequently published in the Dutch *Tijdschrift voor Vrouwenstudies* (Journal of Women's Studies) under the title "De witte toren van vrouwenstudies" (The White Tower of Women's Studies) (1984). For an account of these events and the debates that followed, within the framework of a broader discussion of Dutch feminist theorizing on race and racism, see Katrine Smiet, "Transatlantic Cross-Pollination': 30 Years of Dutch Feminist Theorizing on Race and Racism" (2014).
71. During her interview with me, Wekker says: "the government . . . had a subsidy policy to support all kinds of minority organizations, so men were very active on that front . . . to get subsidy for their organizations, but it was mostly in the social/cultural sphere, to organize get-together's,

in the Turkish and Moroccan community very much around mosques, to build mosques. . . . But it wasn't, you know, a *broad* movement; they were organizing according to ethnic backgrounds.”

72. My account is necessarily very brief and limited. For the full trajectory of the black, migrant, and refugee women's movement in the Netherlands, see the edited volume by Maayke Botman, Nancy Jouwe, and Gloria Wekker, *Caleidoscopische visies. De zwarte-, migranten-, en vluchtelingenvrouwenbeweging in Nederland* (Kaleidoscopic Visions: The Black, Migrant, and Refugee Women's Movement in the Netherlands) (2001). The book also discusses the particular choice of the Dutch movement to name itself as black, migrant, and refugee women's movement. For an account in English, see Smiet, “Transatlantic Cross-Pollination': 30 Years of Dutch Feminist Theorizing on Race and Racism” (2014).
73. The figure of Fortuyn is central to the sexualization of the “war on terror,” which is one of my central concerns in chapter 3. For an analysis of this phenomenon in the Netherlands, which centers the figure of Fortuyn, see Stefan Dudink, “A Queer Nodal Point: Homosexuality in Dutch Debates on Islam and Multiculturalism” (2017).
74. Besides the question of who managed to seize the positions of power, or perhaps in relation to that question, a history still needs to be written of how the epidemic affected white and black gay men differently in the Netherlands. Wekker recalls that some of her informants speak about a lively Surinamese gay male community in Amsterdam that was decimated by the epidemic. See also the documentary by Surinamese director Andre Reeder, *Aan Niets Overleden* (Cause of Death: Nothing) (1996). Reeder was also a member of the queer of color collective Strange Fruit, active in Amsterdam in the 1990s.
75. As Wekker recalls during her interview with me, Tineke Sumter, one of the founding members of Sister Outsider, was previously a member of Suho.
76. The COC, the major LGBT organization in the Netherlands, publicly supported the presence of the PVV as extra-coalitional partner in the government that had to be formed after the elections in 2010. COC chairperson Vera Bergkamp stated: “We will not be hijacked by the left or the right, but we look where our interests are best met. PVV indeed touches a chord with gays. We cannot afford to look the other way when people are under duress. Violence against

gays has increased according to the police in the past years. Among the perpetrators Moroccan boys are overrepresented” (Bergkamp, quoted in Wekker 2016, 115).

77. Duyvendak does mention Strange Fruit, a queer of color collective active in Amsterdam from 1989 to 2002 that organized within the framework of the national organization COC, although in a critical relation with it. Yet, interestingly, in the brief portrait of the group that he provides, he avoids mentioning that one of the central concerns of the group was precisely how AIDS differently affected queer people of color, some of them sex workers. For a comprehensive account of the trajectory of Strange Fruit, its work and vision, its relations with Sister Outsider, and its tensions with the COC’s structure, see Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (2011, 121-137). El-Tayeb herself has been part of the group from 1996 to 2000.
78. For different accounts of the time that Lorde spent in Berlin and of her impact on Afro-German women and the Afro-German movement, see Dagmar Shultz’s documentary *Audre Lorde—The Berlin Years 1984 to 1992* (2012) and the collective volume edited by Stella Bolaki and Sabine Broeck, *Audre Lorde’s Transnational Legacies* (2015).
79. The reference is to Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982).
80. Wekker recalls the same instances of identification in a dialogue with Cassandra Ellerbe-Dueck about the impact of Lorde on the Afro-German and the Afro-Dutch women’s movements: “There were so many points of recognition: for instance, the episode when she describes little fat Audre with bad eyesight, wriggling between her mother’s legs as the mother tries to comb the daughter’s unruly hair. The smells of the hair oil and the pain of that episode is so vividly evoked that I felt myself back in my own mother’s lap. But I was also breathlessly reading Audre’s analyses of the inevitable division of roles between black and white lesbians in intimate relationships, where, based on a racist-sexist worldview, black women were assigned the butch role because they did not stand a chance of being identified with feminine beauty. I had never read anything that was so insightful, poetic, and meaningful at the same time” (Ellerbe-Dueck and Wekker 2015, 58).
81. Not only did Lorde labor to get Afro-German women together, creating an encounter from which *Showing Our Colors* emerged; but, more specifically, she insisted that the Orlanda publishing house,

which had translated some of her writings prior to her arrival in Berlin, stop translating her own texts and support, instead, a project by Afro-German women themselves (El-Tayeb 2011, 66).

82. For an account of the resistances and attacks that the book elicited in Dutch media and academia at the time of its first publication in Dutch in 1984, see Baukje Prins, *De onschuld voorbij. Het debat over de multiculturele samenleving* (Beyond Innocence: The Debate about the Multicultural Society) (2000). Essed's first book, which had been attacked both politically and methodologically, was followed by a more theoretically-driven study of everyday racism, titled *Understanding Everyday Racism: An Interdisciplinary Theory and Analysis of the Experiences of Black Women* (1991). For a more comprehensive account of Essed's work, see the entry on her in the online encyclopedia of Afro-European studies, written by Sabrina Marchetti: <http://www.encyclopediaofafroeuropianstudies.eu/encyclopedia/philomena-essed/> (accessed January 15, 2017).
83. See Wekker's own account of her involvement in policy making and of the transformations of the field of Dutch antiracist and gender equality policy from the 1980s to the present, in *White Innocence* (2016, 52-64).
84. In Wekker's memory, Lorde was central not only to the development of black lesbian feminist organizing in Europe, but to some of her own personal choices as well. In her dialogue with Cassandra Ellerbe-Dueck, she remembers: "Above all, [Audre] gave me the courage to do what I had dreamed of doing but had not previously had the courage to undertake: in 1987 I entered a Ph.D. program at the University of California, Los Angeles, where I focused on Afro-Surinamese women's constructions of sexuality" (Ellerbe-Dueck and Wekker 2015, 60).
85. Wekker's PhD dissertation was titled '*I Am Gold Money (I Pass Through All Hands, But I Do Not Lose My Value)*': *The Construction of Selves, Gender, and Sexualities in a Female, Working-Class, Afro-Surinamese Setting* (1992).
86. Wekker's research on *mati* participated at a very early stage in the transnational turn in gay, lesbian, and queer studies, for she conceptualizes the practice and institutions of *mati* as finding their conditions of possibility within the African diaspora. Moreover, *The Politics of Passion* also suggests some of the ways in which *mati* morphed by travelling to the Netherlands from the 1970s onward, where it encountered, resisted, or merged with gay and lesbian

identity formations. In the context of a discussion of the black lesbian feminist genealogy of queer of color critique, it is worth noticing that Wekker's research on *mati* explored black women's sexuality and sexual formations by placing an unprecedented emphasis on sex itself. During a 2009 interview, Wekker answers as follows to the interviewer, who asks her to explain the lack of a conversation about sex among Caribbean feminists: "I think it's broader than just Caribbean feminists, because I think it's also true for African-American feminists. Hortense Spillers' observation in the early 1980s that black women are like 'the beached whales of the sexual universe,' that they're not speaking, but awaiting their verb, still holds true. . . . I think Darlene Clark's insights are correct when she talks about how . . . it became so important for black women to don a cloak of asexuality because of the history of black women being raped, black women being defined as unrape-able, always already ready to have sex. So black women decided they had to be asexual, to perform asexuality. I think that has played a huge role for a long time" (Wekker and Gosine 2009, 2). Wekker is not indifferent to the hegemonic representations of black women's sexuality mentioned in this passage. At the beginning of the chapter of *The Politics of Passion* devoted to the life narrative of her central informant, Miss Juliette, Wekker asks: "how do I tell Miss Juliette's life history, and the sexual stories of other Creole working-class women, in light of a dominant Euro-American history of representing black women's sexuality as excessive, insatiable, the epitome of animal lust, and always already pathological?" (Wekker 2006, 5) However, these questions do not impede her to undertake the task of narrating sex. As such, her intervention bears disciplinary implications. As she notes in the interview mentioned above, "Gay Studies has engaged with sexuality, but Lesbian Studies has engaged more with gender. And so whatever it is that lesbians do sexually, we don't get a very clear view of it. I'm pretty much doing away with all these binaries, which keep repeating a particular way of looking at the world and I think that's what upsets [some] students" (Wekker and Gosine 2009, 4). What are the implications of such observations for the project of queer of color critique, which finds its genealogical anchoring point in the women of color and black lesbian feminism of the 1970s and 1980s? Both Muñoz and Ferguson insist on how queer of color critique must

disidentify with Marxism, black liberation, and queer theory. Yet, if we pay particular attention to the domain of the sexual, as Wekker does, should not queer of color critique disidentify, at least in part, with black lesbian feminism as well? It is interesting, in this respect, to look at Muñoz’s reading of Vaginal Creme Davis’ “terrorist drag.” As Muñoz points out in *Disidentifications*, “Vaginal Davis . . . disidentified with Black Power by selecting Angela [Davis] and *not* the Panthers as a site of self-fashioning and political formation. . . . Vintage Black Power discourse contained many homophobic and masculinist elements that were toxic to queer and feminist subjects” (Muñoz 1999, 99). In this passage, the immediate alignment of queers and feminists of color through their disidentification with Black Power ideology tends to obliterate the fact that, by explicitly sexualizing Angela Davis’ name, Vaginal Davis partly disidentified with black feminism. Vaginal Davis herself, quoted by Muñoz, registers the ironic nature of the appropriation: “I was the first one in my family to go to college—I got militant. That’s when I started reading about Angela and the Panthers, and that’s when Vaginal emerged as a filtering of Angela through humor” (Davis, quoted in Muñoz 1999, 98). By focusing on these “lighter” forms of disidentification, and following Wekker’s lead in questioning the disciplinary status of the sexual across the overlapping fields of gay, lesbian, and queer studies, more work should be done on the relationships between black lesbian feminism and queer of color critique.

87. The two following texts are key in this respect: first, Wekker’s inaugural address as the chair of Gender and Ethnicity at Utrecht University, which discussed the intersectional articulations of power in the field of knowledge production and was titled “Nesten bouwen op een winderige plek. Denken over gender en etniciteit in Nederland” (Building Nest in a Windy Place: Thinking about Gender and Ethnicity in the Netherlands) (2002); second, an essay she wrote with Helma Lutz that introduced the concept of intersectionality in the Dutch context as the offspring of the black, migrant, and refugee women’s movement, titled “Een hoogvlakte met koude winden. De geschiedenis van het gender- en etniciteitdenken in Nederland” (A Wind-Swept Plain: The History of Gender and Ethnicity-Thought in the Netherlands) (2001).
88. Wekker devotes an entire chapter of *White Innocence* to the contemporary anti-Zwarte Piet movement (Wekker 2016, 139-167).

89. In *White Innocence*, Wekker borrows the notion of “cultural archive” from Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). For a collective account of the specificities of Dutch racism, which includes a contribution by Wekker herself, see the volume edited by Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving, *Dutch Racism* (2014).
90. The Diversity Commission was conceived of, from its inception, as a *temporary* institution within the institution, which must work for one year and then disappear after having made a difference.

### *Chapter Three*

1. In the passage from which this quote is extracted, Rao is concerned with a slightly different problem: that is, the difficulty of analyzing the global South from other locations in the global South.
2. That queer diasporic critique is genealogically rooted in the earlier work of lesbian feminists of color, and more broadly in transnational feminist analyses, is worth remarking. In the introduction to his *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora* (2003), Martin F. Manalansan IV explicitly recalls this genealogy. His gesture parallels that of Ferguson’s in *Aberrations in Black*, even as Manalansan shifts the emphasis from the work of 1980s feminists of color addressing the articulations of gender, sexuality, race, and class in the United States toward those feminist analyses that most explicitly engaged, already at that time, with the transnational dimension of those articulations: “This book and the works of the ‘new queer studies’ owe a clear intellectual debt to feminist scholars of the ‘politics of location.’ In the mid to late 1980s, several feminist thinkers, among them lesbians, Third World women, and women of color, began a critique of the prevailing feminist construction of *woman* as a universal category and called for the recognition and analysis of the particularities and divergences in experiences of women in various parts of the world” (7-8). Manalansan’s explicit reference is to the work of Adrienne Rich, Chandra T. Mohanty, and Gloria Anzaldúa, among others (see Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981; Rich [1984] 1986; Mohanty 1984). Gopinath goes one step further. Rather than just acknowledging the feminist *genealogy* of queer diasporic critique, she mobilizes a feminist vantage point in her own analysis of queer diasporic formations, thus adding yet another layer of critique to her intervention: “[*Impossible*

*Desires*] . . . pay[s] special attention to *queer female subjectivity in the diaspora*, as it is this particular positionality that forms a constitutive absence in both dominant nationalist and diasporic discourses. More surprisingly perhaps, and therefore worth interrogating closely, is the elision of queer female subjectivity within seemingly radical cultural and political diasporic projects that center a gay male or heterosexual feminist diasporic subject. *Impossible Desires* refuses to accede to the splitting of queerness from feminism that marks such projects” (Gopinath 2005a, 6).

3. To be more precise, Ferguson posits feminist and queer of color critique as a necessary mediation and point of support for the emergence of a truly postnationalist turn in American studies. A postnationalist American studies, he argues, cannot simply articulate a critique of U.S. nationalism through the historical subjects foregrounded by cultural and revolutionary nationalist projects, for these obliterate “the gender and sexual heterogeneity that composes social formations” and thus collude with both U.S. nationalism and liberal ideology on the terrain of heteropatriarchy (Ferguson 2004, 139). Registering this discussion, Gopinath notes that “queer of color critique, as Ferguson articulates it, explicitly rejects the parochialism of American studies as well as the underlying heteronormativity of even its postnationalist versions” (Gopinath 2005b, 159). Thus, despite its primary focus on the context of the United States, “Ferguson’s analysis . . . point[s] to the inadequacy of nation-based, conventional area-studies approaches to theorizing the production of modern racial and sexual formations” (159).
4. I must note that I locate Reddy’s work within the field of queer diasporic critique even as he explicitly identifies his own analysis as an instance of queer of color critique and does not posit any difference between the two. Indeed, as I have been arguing so far, a distinction between the two theoretical formations can be established only provisionally and precariously.
5. Reddy reports the following long passage from the testimony that Rahman delivered at a symposium on ‘Shifting Grounds for Asylum: Genital Surgery and Sexual Orientation,’ which took place at the New York University School of Law on October 16, 1997: “I came to the United States from Pakistan in 1991 as a student. I had come to the United States because I had a thought that coming out as a gay

man would be safer for me in this country. After graduating in 1995, I moved to New York City and became a member of the South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association, SALGA. I had realized that going back to Pakistan was not an option for me anymore. I would not be able to do the kinds of work that I wanted to do with safety in Pakistan. There is no infrastructure in place in Pakistan where I could obtain legal recourse if threatened for being queer. As queer immigrants in this country are usually placed outside immigration law, applying for asylum seemed to be the only strategy where I did not feel that I was compromising myself as a gay man. Heterosexual marriage and working a job I did not like for years to get a green card did not seem like attractive choices. Choosing to apply for asylum instead of availing myself of other options also became a political choice. Furthermore, I strongly believed in my claim and felt that under U.S. immigration law I fit the categories of asylum. I did have a genuine fear that if I led life as an openly gay man in Pakistan, my life would be in danger” (Rahman, quoted in Reddy 2011, 143). Reddy first offered his analysis of the “gay Pakistani immigrant” in an essay titled “Asian Diaspora, Neoliberalism, and Family: Reviewing the Case for Homosexual Asylum in the Context of Family Rights” (2005). The same essay appears as the third chapter of *Freedom with Violence*.

6. The Audre Lorde Project is a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit, Trans, and Gender Non Conforming People of Color center for community organizing, based in New York City and working for social and economic justice. The report to which Reddy makes reference in this passage, realized by himself and Natalie Bennett, is titled *Communities at a Crossroads: U.S. Right Wing Policies and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit and Transgender Immigrants of Color in New York City* (2004).
7. To make that argument, one need not assume, as Reddy seems to do, that heteropatriarchy within diasporic formations is simply an *effect* of state migration management. Earlier in his analysis, Reddy himself points out that “Rahman’s discourse marks a certain liminality within both normative diasporic formations and the nation-state, each of which is dependent upon the racialized institutions of kinship and family” (Reddy 2011, 151). Hence, he seems to suggest, like Gopinath and Ferguson respectively do, that among the targets of queer diasporic critique is also the heteropatriarchy articulated within

diasporic formations in a relation of relative autonomy (or even antagonism) to the state. In other words, diasporic heteropatriarchy works *in articulation* with state racism and heteropatriarchy, not just as its by-product. Similarly, one need not work through a purely instrumental and negative notion of ideology, as Reddy seems to do when he posits that the liberal ideology of universal sexual freedom serves only to “mask” the state’s incitement of diasporic heteropatriarchy in the service of capital accumulation, that is, for the production of a racialized and gendered labor force. A less reductionist notion of ideology, such as the one proposed by Hall in the 1980s, is entirely sufficient to unearth the social contradictions of concern to Reddy’s analysis. Avoiding the deployment of a purely negative notion of ideology does make a difference especially in this context, for it helps the critic not to disqualify, if only implicitly, both the experience of those queers who do claim asylum in Europe or the United States, like Saeed Rahman, as well as the experience of those who labor and mobilize to make such claims possible in the first place. In this context, it is also worth mentioning that Rahman himself is to a large extent aware of the complexities of his social location as a gay Pakistani asylum seeker in the United States. Alisa Solomon, who conducted an interview with him on this matter, writes: “The legal scholar—and gay Pakistani immigrant—Saeed Rahman has explained how he found that winning his asylum claim in 1997 meant demonizing Pakistan in ways that were painful to him, as though showing how impossible it is for a gay man to live openly there required a thorough, even colonialist, indictment of the entire culture. At the same time, Rahman found he was expected to ‘buy into a simple discourse of how wonderful America is.’ Dreaming of coming here, he had ‘felt that in America I could live freely. Even if one is harassed or attacked for being gay, there’s recourse to the law. But that narrative didn’t factor in that I was non-white and going to be an immigrant’” (Solomon 2005, 20). This passage shows that Rahman made use of the asylum system available to him even as he refuses, from a queer of color diasporic vantage point, to articulate the United States as a site of freedom and safety.

8. For a good overview of diasporic critique within cultural studies, ranging from the foundational essays by Hall and Gilroy to more recent interventions, including Gopinath’s and Manalansan’s, see the

volume *Theorizing Diaspora* (2003), edited by Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur. For other collective volumes on queer diaspora, see *Q & A: Queer in Asian America* (Eng and Hom 1998) and *Queer Diasporas* (Patton and Sánchez-Eppler 2000).

9. Puar and Rai refer to the summary of the lectures that Foucault gave at the Collège de France in 1974-75, first published in French in 1999 and later in English under the title *Abnormal* (Foucault [1999] 2003). The version of the summary to which Puar and Rai refer was published earlier, in a volume of Foucault's writings edited by Paul Rabinow and titled, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (1997, 51-57).
10. In fact, Foucault himself maintained that the more ancient figure of the monster, as a juridico-legal figure, "will continue to haunt the analysis and the status of the abnormal man" (Foucault [1975] 1997, 52). More generally, in his writings on the different technologies of power that he terms sovereignty, discipline, and biopolitics, Foucault counters his own tendency to posit the relation between them as a temporal sequence by emphasizing that they rather penetrate one another. In *Security, Territory, Population*, for instance, he writes: "There is not the legal age, the disciplinary age, and then the age of security [or biopolitics]. . . . In reality you have a series of complex edifices in which, of course, the techniques themselves change and are perfected, or anyway become more complicated, but in which what above all changes is the dominant characteristic, or more exactly, the system of correlations between juridico-legal mechanisms, disciplinary mechanisms, and mechanisms of security" (Foucault [2004] 2007, 8).
11. Of course, 9/11 should not be understood as the absolute starting point of such a disarticulation. However, Puar and Rai are correct in identifying the ways in which the specific politico-ideological context of the "war on terror" accelerated and intensified the process.
12. In this essay, Puar and Rai make only a passing remark on queer diasporic formations, emphasizing their silence: "While the revival of Sikh middle-class 'good citizenship' nationalist pride threatens to hinder possible coalitions across class, race, and sexuality, South Asian queer organizations have been relatively quiet about the racist backlash. Turbans have never been viewed as very queer-friendly, at least not in the diaspora. Community-based antibacklash/war organizing efforts—for example, a recent vigil in Jackson Heights, New York, organized by International South Asia Forum—have been

- conspicuously ‘straight’” (Puar and Rai 2002, 139).
13. On the activation of anti-intellectual censorship of public critique in the aftermath of 9/11, see Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004a), especially chapter 1.
  14. On the one hand, Puar contests on concrete grounds the very claim of exceptionality. This is indeed how she opens her essay: “The torture of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib is neither exceptional nor singular, as many people, including Donald Rumsfeld, the Bush administration, the U.S. military establishment, and some good liberals would have us believe. The opposite is shown by the prison guard backgrounds of several soldiers facing prosecution for the Iraqi prisoner situation and by the incarceration practices within the U.S. prison industrial complex or even by the brutal sodomizing of Abner Louima by New York police” (Puar 2004, 522). On the other hand, pointing at the “disgust” articulated by both state and popular reactions to the pictures, she rightfully asks: “What is ‘disgusting,’ a commonly used word of description, about these photos? U.S. soldiers grinning, stupidly waving their thumbs in the air, the depicted sex acts themselves, simulated oral and anal sex between men, or the fact that the photos were taken at all? And why are these photos any more revolting than pictures of body parts blown apart by missiles and explosives? Amidst Bush’s claims to the contrary, the actions of the U.S. military in Saddam’s former torture chambers certainly narrows the gap between us and them—between the patriot and the terrorist” (523). Thus, she does not only question the exceptionality of the torture practices deployed by U.S. military officers, but also the articulations of U.S. exceptionalism informing such reactions.
  15. The reference is to liberal *New York Times* journalist Thomas Friedman (Puar 2004, 523).
  16. The reference is to socialist feminist Barbara Ehrenreich (Puar 2004, 528).
  17. In her own reading of the Abu Ghraib scandal, Judith Butler makes clear that the tortures perpetrated on Iraqi prisoners did not just exploit the presumed misogyny and homophobia of the victims, but actively engaged in the work of *producing* those victims *as* misogynist and homophobic, according to the Orientalist script: “The point is not simply to break down the codes, but to construct a subject that would break down when coercively forced to break such codes—and I suppose we have to ask—which subject would *not* break down under

those conditions?” (Butler 2008, 17)

18. The Al-Fatiha Foundation, once based in the United States and now dissolved, was founded by Alam (a Pakistani American) in 1997. I return on Puar’s and Massad’s respective critiques of Alam and Al-Fatiha later in this chapter.
19. For a reading of homonationalism through the Gramscian concept of integral state, see Gianfranco Rebutini, “Integral State, Historical Bloc and Homonationalism in France. A Gramscian Analysis of Neoliberal ‘Equality Politics’” (2013b).
20. See chapter 1, note 12.
21. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault outlines his method as follows: “instead of reconstituting chains of inference (as one often does in the history of the sciences or of philosophy), instead of drawing up tables of differences (as the linguists do), it would describe systems of dispersion” (Foucault [1969] 1972, 37). And he follows: “Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say, for the sake of convenience, that we are dealing with a discursive formation” (38). The phrase itself “regularity in dispersion,” instead, is the way in which Laclau and Mouffe describe this early epistemic project of Foucault’s while appropriating it in the service of their own discursive rereading of Gramsci: “The type of coherence we attribute to a discursive formation is . . . close to that which characterizes the concept of ‘discursive formation’ formulated by Foucault: regularity in dispersion. In the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault rejects four hypotheses concerning the unifying principle of a discursive formation—reference to the same object, a common style in the production of statements, constancy of the concepts, and reference to a common theme. Instead, he makes dispersion itself the principle of unity, insofar as it is governed by rules of formation, by the complex conditions of existence of the dispersed statements” (Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001, 105).
22. For instance, in her 2006 essay Puar suggests that the main contradiction characterizing homonationalism—that is, the absorption of elements of feminist and LGBTQ discourse within heteropatriarchal nationalism—is stabilized by an Orientalist geographic imaginary that locates proper

identity (hetero or homo) in the West and sexual perversity in the Middle East (Puar 2006, 68). Drawing on Derek Gregory's rereading of Said's notion of "imaginative geographies," she argues that this Orientalist imaginary is *performative*, for its "desired truths become lived as truths . . . thus producing all sorts of material traces and evidences of these truths, despite what counter-evidence may exist" (68). As we saw in her discussion of the different reactions to the Abu Ghraib pictures, the United States manages to cohere as a space rid of misogyny and homophobia precisely through a scandal involving the misogyny and homophobia of the U.S. military, yet displaced on the Iraqi population. Hence, Puar argues: "It is through imaginative geographies produced by homo-nationalism . . . that the contradictions inherent in the idealization of the US as a properly multicultural heteronormative but nevertheless gay-friendly, tolerant, and sexually-liberated society can remain in tension" (68). This ingenious reading, however, reduces a fundamentally *social* contradiction to the internal logic of homonationalism as a discursive formation, rather than conceptualizing homonationalism itself as a flexible ideological formation able to articulate heterogeneous interests into a hegemonic bloc and thus win over the consent of heterogeneous social segments. On the concept of "imaginative geographies" to which Puar refers, see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (1978a) and Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq* (2004).

23. In his different writings and lectures on the matter, Foucault tends to analyze the emergence of disciplinary power and biopolitics (as well as the whole series sovereignty-discipline-biopolitics) as an historical sequence. Yet at the same time, he repeatedly makes clear that these different technologies of power must not be regarded as progressively replacing one another. See note 10.
24. Foucault also argues that sexuality constitutes a major site for the articulation of discipline and biopolitics: "On the one hand, sexuality, being an eminently corporeal mode of behavior, is a matter for individualizing disciplinary controls. . . . But because it also has procreative effects, sexuality is also inscribed, takes effect, in broad biological processes that concern not the bodies of individuals but . . . the multiple unity of the population. Sexuality exists at the point where body and population meet" (Foucault [1997] 2003, 251-252).
25. Neither Puar nor Mbembe propose that necropolitics simply contradicts

or displaces Foucault's analysis of disciplinary and biopolitical technologies of power. Mbembe coins the concept of necropolitics by looking at the space of the colony and at the Apartheid regime, hence implicitly signaling the limited applicability of Foucault's analysis across the imperial divide. However, with specific reference to the current occupation of Palestine, he writes: "Late-modern colonial occupation differs in many ways from early-modern occupation, particularly in its combining of the disciplinary, the biopolitical, and the necropolitical" (Mbembe 2003, 27). Puar, in turn, observes: "Many accounts of contemporary biopolitics . . . foreground either race and state racism or, as Judith Butler does, the ramification of the emergence of the category of 'sex,' but rarely the two together. In this endeavor I examine the process of disaggregating exceptional queer subjects from queer racialized populations in contemporary U.S. politics rather than proffer an overarching paradigm of biopolitical sexuality that resolves these dilemmas. By centering race and sexuality simultaneously in the reproduction of relations of living and dying, I want to keep taut the tension between biopolitics and necropolitics. . . . This bio-necro collaboration conceptually acknowledges biopower's direct activity in death, while remaining bound to the optimization of life, and necropolitics' nonchalance toward death even as it seeks out killing as a primary aim" (Puar 2007, 35). The reference at the beginning of this passage is to Judith Butler's essay "Sexual Inversions" (1993b).

26. Although I emphasize the formation of "queer necropolitics" as a key theoretical axis of Puar's analysis and as a new terrain of queer critique, in the introduction to the book Puar proposes three other conceptual constructs that build on the notion of biopolitics and guide her analysis throughout *Terrorist Assemblages*. First, "U.S. sexual exceptionalism," which brings together the representation of the United States as exceptionally tolerant of sexual diversity; the exceptional and precarious incorporation—necessary to that representation—of elements of feminist and LGBTQ discourses into U.S. heteropatriarchal nationalism; and finally, perhaps most importantly, the exceptional suspension of the limits of state power that the United States—not only, but also through the articulation of this sexual exceptionalism—legitimize for themselves in times of war (Puar 2007, 3-11). Second, "queer as regulatory," which indicates the

shift of queerness from a predominantly disciplinary apparatus to a biopolitical technology of population management (11-24). Third, “the ascendancy of whiteness,” by which Puar means the incorporation of “proper” ethnic difference (middle-class and straight) into a neoliberal politics of multicultural equality. According to Puar, as much as homonormativity supplements rather than replacing or displacing heteropatriarchy, the incorporation of the “proper” ethnic—versus the racialized other—supplements the hegemony of whiteness. Moreover, in her view, it is this incorporation of the middle-class straight ethnic, hand-in-hand with the emergence of homonormativity, that produces the basic norm of homonationalism: the homosexual other is white, the racial other is straight (24-32). In the introduction to *Terrorist Assemblages*, Puar also highlights the role played by the religion/secularism divide in the formation of homonationalism: “Queer secularity demands a particular transgression of norms, religious norms that are understood to otherwise bind that subject to an especially egregious interdictory religious frame. The queer agential subject can only ever be fathomed outside the norming constrictions of religion, conflating agency and resistance” (13). This passage opens onto a contemporary field of feminist and queer analyses of the relation between sexual politics and the religion/secularism divide, in what have sometimes been termed “postsecular” times. For the postsecular, see Judith Butler, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, and Cornel West, *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (2011); William E. Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (2000); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (2007); Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun, *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* (2010); and Rosi Braidotti, Bolette Blaagaard, Tobijn de Graauw, and Eva Midden, *Transformations of Religion and the Public Sphere: Postsecular Publics* (2014); for a foundational feminist reconceptualization of agency and resistance from the vantage point of religious formations, see Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (2004); for an analysis of the relation between sexual politics and secularism in the context of the “war on terror,” see Judith Butler, “Sexual Politics, Torture, and Secular Time” (2008); for a collection of postsecular and theological engagements with Puar’s work, see the special issue of *Culture and Religion* edited by Melissa M. Wilcox, titled “*Terrorist Assemblages*

Meets the Study of Religion: Rethinking Queer Studies” (2014); for a critique of the debate on homonationalism and the postsecular turn in queer postcolonial theory, because of its failure to properly address the violence exercised by religious formations on sexual minorities, see Nikita Dhawan, “The Empire Prays Back: Religion, Secularity, and Queer Critique” (2013).

27. See also the special issue edited by Haritaworn, Kuntsman, and Posocco, “Murderous Inclusions” (2013).
28. Interestingly, in *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others: Regenerating Violent Times and Places* (2015), Haritaworn shifts back and forth between a focus on the biopolitical/necropolitical management of bodies and populations and an analysis of the ideological construction of consent. Through explicit reference to *Policing the Crisis*, Haritaworn suggests that the emergence of “Muslim homophobia” in contemporary Germany be understood within a historical chain of moral panics and within the longer history of European racism and colonialism (6-8). Conversely, the “queer lover” is conceptualized as “a transitional object that eases the shift from a welfare to a neoliberal regime, and ushers us into consent with techniques and horizons that would not otherwise be palatable” (35). Thus, the “queer lover” and the “hateful other” form, in fact, an ideological pair. However, the privileging of such a reading is at least in part contradicted in other passages: “Foregrounding a transnational race, gender and disability studies lens and placing it in critical dialogue with affect studies and scholarship on biopolitics and necropolitics, I argue that the hate/crime paradigm travels within a context where capital, identity moulds and carceral and biomedical methods cross borders instantly, while critiques and alternatives often do not” (126). *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others* seems to suggest an interesting encounter between queer necropolitics and the analysis of hegemonic formations, yet Haritaworn tends to by-pass the tensions between the two approaches, shifting seamlessly from one to the other. For other analyses of homonationalism in the context of European social formations, see Jin Haritaworn, Tamsila Tauqir, and Esra Erdem, “Gay Imperialism: Gender and Sexuality Discourse in the ‘War on Terror’” (2008), on Britain; Paul Mepschen, Jan W. Duyvendak, and Evelien H. Tonkens, “Sexual Politics, Orientalism and Multicultural Citizenship in the Netherlands” (2010), on the Netherlands; Judith

Butler, “Sexual Politics, Torture, and Secular Time” (2008), on the Netherlands and France; and Éric Fassin, “National Identities and Transnational Intimacies: Sexual Democracy and the Politics of Immigration in Europe” (2010), on some of the differences between Europe and the United States. Puar herself refers to the Dutch and the British contexts as key sites of emergence of homonationalism (Puar 2007, 11-21). In *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (2011), with a particular focus on the Dutch and German social formations yet looking at the European postnational space as a whole, Fatima El-Tayeb discusses homonationalism within the broader problematic of the intersections between gender, sexuality, race, and citizenship in contemporary Europe. She does so from a queer of color and queer diasporic vantage.

29. Gianfranco Rebutini correctly points out that Puar deploys assemblage not only as concept, but also as method: “Jasbir Puar uses an original method to detect the sites of emergence of homonationalism in the United States. She is interested in both cultural phenomena that may seem trivial, such as the cartoon *South Park* (very popular and also intended for an adult audience), and in certain cultural phenomena and events related to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Thus, she constructs what she calls *assemblages*. In fact, these [assemblages], a concept that she borrows from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, refer to . . . the composition of elements of discourse that are apparently disarticulated, but that drawn together reveal a very convincing critical coherence” (Rebutini 2013a, 78. My translation). Assemblage as concept and assemblage as method overlap. Indeed, as I already mentioned, Puar herself points out that this assembling of different sites of articulation is the best way to expose the contingency of homonationalism as a political formation.
30. For a number of discussions of the relation between assemblage and articulation, see Arturo Escobar, *Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life, Redes* (2008); Jennifer Daryl Slack and J. Macgregor Wise, “Articulation and Assemblage” (2005); David Featherstone, “On Assemblage and Articulation” (2011); and Alexander G. Weheliye, “Assemblages: Articulation” (2014).
31. I borrow the phrase from Clare Hemmings’s critique of the “affective turn,” in “Invoking Affect: Cultural Theory and the Ontological Turn” (2005).

32. Yet, unlike other participants in the “ontological turn,” Puar does not dismiss representation as a necessary terrain for critical theory. Upon registering what she terms a “somewhat circuitous debate about the relationship of affect to representation”—a debate which tends to posit a split between those who focus on pre-social and pre-subjective *affect* (ontology) versus those who work on *emotion*, that is, the form taken by affect through its cultural representations and circulations, which the critic must decode (epistemology)—Puar, whose work unmistakably privileges the notion of affect foregrounded by the “ontological turn,” nonetheless remarks: “The collective project, since all we can really enact is a representational schema of affect, is what we are now developing: an epistemology of ontology and affect” (Puar 2007, 207). For a feminist analysis of emotion, instead, see Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004). For an excellent Marxist critique of the “ontological turn” in anthropology, see David Graeber, “Radical Alterity is Just Another Way of Saying ‘Reality’: A Reply to Eduardo Viveiros de Castro” (2015).
33. Perhaps more concretely, Puar suggests that identity politics colludes with diversity management and liberal multiculturalism, hence “with the disciplinary apparatus of the state—census, demography, racial profiling, surveillance—in that ‘difference’ is encased within a structural container that simply wishes the messiness of identity into a formulaic grid” (Puar 2007, 212). To a certain extent, she is right. But, that such state practices occupy the politico-ideological terrain of identity is no reason for a counter-hegemonic project to abandon it altogether. On the contrary, as I argued in the previous two chapters following both Hall and Duggan, that terrain must be sized if a counter-hegemonic project is to effectively articulate and transform the field of common sense at its disposal. Moreover, it is the labor of feminist, queer, and antiracist political formations that has historically produced identity as a key terrain of struggle. To abandon it because of its opening to exploitative or oppressive practices (by the state or any other political subject) means cultivating the fantasy that we may produce political practices and languages that are radically resistant to contradictory articulations. Laclau and Mouffe’s warning is worth recalling here: “There is . . . no subject—nor, further, any ‘necessity’—which is absolutely radical and irrecoverable by the dominant order, and which constitutes an absolutely guaranteed

point of departure for a total transformation” (Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001, 169-170). As an alternative to identity politics, Puar proposes to move toward “affective politics.” The latter, however, necessarily lacks precise contours: “There is no entity, no identity, no queer subject or subject to queer, rather queerness coming forth at us from all directions, screaming its defiance, suggesting a move from intersectionality to assemblage, an affective conglomeration that recognizes other contingencies of belonging (melding, fusing, viscosity, bouncing) that might not fall so easily into what is sometimes denoted as reactive community formations—identity politics—by control theorists” (Puar 2007, 211). As this passage shows, this affective politics would be quite literally, in Puar’s view, a politics without a subject.

34. In fact, Puar explicitly criticizes queer of color and queer diasporic theoretical formations, both because of their deployment of intersectionality as well as on more concrete political grounds. For instance, she writes: “Queer intersectional analyses challenge [queerness’ possible complicities with racial, class, gender, and citizenship privileges], but in doing so may fail to subject their own frames to the very critique they deploy. . . . [Q]ueer of color and queer immigrant communities (not to mention queer of color critique) are always beyond reproach, an untenable position given the (class, religious, gender-queer, national, regional, linguistic, generational) tensions within, among, and between queer diasporic, immigrant, and of color communities, thus obfuscating any of their own conservative proclivities. Conversely, it also holds queer of color organizing and theorizing to impossible standards and expectations, always beholden to spaces and actions of resistance, transgression, subversion” (Puar 2007, 23). In this passage, Puar seems to be criticizing the hegemonization of race within the field of queer theory, a struggle to which her own work nonetheless contributes. I suggest that the type of discontent articulated by Puar (and many others today) derives, in part, from a misreading of the practice of intersectionality within contemporary queer theory. As I argued in the second chapter, the latter should not be understood just as a pluralist call for inclusion—hence Puar’s critique of its failure to equally thematize the differences within queer of color and diasporic formations themselves—but rather as an hegemonic struggle around

race: a process of recomposition.

35. Puar follows: “But to render intersectionality as an archaic relic of identity politics bypasses entirely the possibility that for some bodies . . . discipline and punish may well still be a primary apparatus of power” (Puar 2012, 63). In this passage, rather than entirely dismissing intersectionality and identity politics (and with them, discipline), Puar seems to suggest that discipline be understood as a residual technology of power operating within social formations otherwise primarily characterized by biopolitical technologies of control. Thus, her reading resembles Foucault’s own understanding of the function of murder as a residue of sovereign power operating within disciplinary and biopolitical regimes. This partially contrasts with Puar’s own insistence, in *Terrorist Assemblages*, that discipline and biopolitics work together and through one another, as Foucault himself maintained. There, she even argues that *both* discipline and biopolitics challenge identity politics and intersectionality: “Foucault’s own provocations include the claim that sexuality is *an intersection*, rather than an interpellative identity, of the body and the population. . . . While Foucault’s formation hails the feminist heuristic of ‘intersectionality,’ unlike intersectional theorizing which foregrounds separate analytics of identity that perform the holistic subjects’ inseparableness, the entities that intersect are the body (not the subject, let us remember) and population” (Puar 2007, 206). In the later essay, instead, she seems to locate identity politics within the purview of disciplinary power, hence positing the shift toward biopolitical technologies of control (diagnosed by Deleuze) as the ground for a necessary turn toward a post-identity politics, or what she terms “affective politics” (see note 33). Within the economy of this argument, she proceeds to offer a residual reading of discipline in order not to entirely dismiss intersectional theoretical and political practices.
36. I use the phrase “gay, lesbian, and homosexual,” rather than LGBTQ, because this is the phrase that Massad himself most often uses in his work.
37. This difference can be partly mapped onto a disciplinary difference between Puar and Massad. While Puar’s work is an instance of transnational feminist and queer critique that deploys the language of contemporary cultural studies, Massad is a professor of modern Arab politics and intellectual history.

38. The passage in question is the following: “The Gay International and this small minority of Arab same-sex practitioners who adopt its epistemology have embarked on a project that can best be described as incitement to discourse” (Massad 2002, 374).
39. Later, situating the incitement to discourse more explicitly in relation to the formation of the Gay International, Massad writes: “It is in the realm of the emergent agenda of sexual rights that made its appearance in the United States and other Western countries in the late 1960s and began to be institutionalized in the 1980s and 1990s that talk of sexual practices in the rest of the world, including the Arab world, would be introduced to the international human rights agenda and would be coupled with notions of ‘civilized’ and ‘uncivilized’ behavior. This *incitement to discourse* on sexual rights outside the United States and Western Europe necessitated that human rights organizations and advocates incorporate existing anthropological knowledge of the non-Western world” (Massad 2007, 37).
40. Merabet is a queer cultural anthropologist specialized on Syria and Lebanon. See his *Queer Beirut* (2014).
41. For example, Merabet opens his essay as follows: “Beirut can be perceived as a social body, with all the complexities of such an organism. Lebanon’s capital provides, in fact, the stage for a panoply of moods and dispositions which are a dynamic result of particular histories and larger socio-historical circumstances” (Merabet 2004, 30). Moreover, the primary scope of his essay is to analyze the contradictory articulations of gay or homosexual identity in relation to the patterns of post-civil war consumerism in Lebanon. While such a reading is not entirely irreconcilable, of course, with insights borrowed from psychoanalysis, the merge takes place, in Merabet’s argument, without any conceptualization of the frictions between the two perspectives.
42. Interestingly, Merabet himself makes a similar point, even if his goal is not to dismiss such sexual formations because of their class belonging. Upon noticing that, strictly speaking, it is hard to identify a “gay community” in Beirut, he specifies: “There are, of course, some local gay interest groups that have formed since the beginning of the decade. For instance, in a Beirut demonstration against the war on Iraq in March 2003, the press covered a half dozen individuals marching underneath rainbow flags. Notwithstanding this arguably

cautious ‘coming out,’ the visibility of local gay advocates within a larger public who would actually recognize the symbolic meaning of the rainbow flag remains limited. This limitation is partly due to the peculiarities of the Lebanese law that classifies homosexuality as a ‘sexual activity that is contrary to nature’ and therefore must be suppressed. Moreover, the various demure attempts by some members of these interest groups to reach out tend to be confined within the boundaries of their own—generally affluent—social backgrounds” (Merabet 2004, 32).

43. The reference is to Michael Warner, *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (1993).
44. On the sexual politics of European colonialism, see Robert Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality* (2003) and Federico Garza Carvajal, *Butterflies Will Burn: Prosecuting Sodomites in Early Modern Spain and Mexico* (2003); on the homoerotics of Orientalism, see Joseph A. Boone, *The Homoerotics of Orientalism* (2014); on the legacy of the colonial export of homophobia, see the report by Human Rights Watch, *This Alien Legacy: The Origins of “Sodomy” Laws in British Colonialism* (2008); for a rereading of Foucault through the history of European colonialism, see Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (1995).
45. On May 11, 2001, the Egyptian police—more specifically, the Cairo Vice Squad and officers from State Security Investigations (*Mabahith Amn al-Dawla*)—raided a discotheque located on a boat moored in the Nile, in Cairo. Of the 55 men involved, the majority were present that night on the boat while the rest were arrested in their home or on the street. For an account of the arrests, the trials, as well as the tortures to which the men were subjected (including anal examinations), see the report by Human Rights Watch, *In a Time of Torture: The Assault on Justice In Egypt’s Crackdown on Homosexual Conduct* (2004).
46. Makarem’s letter, in turn, provoked a new response by Massad, titled “I Criticize Gay Internationalists, not Gays” (2009b).
47. In a later essay, titled “The Story of HELEM” (2011), Makarem offers a more detailed account of the formation of the group. For Helem’s approach to the articulations between sexual politics and anti-imperialism, see also Jedidiah Anderson, “LGBTIQ NGOs in Lebanon

- in the Wake of Postcolonialism and Joseph Massad's Critique" (2014).
48. This point is reiterated in *Islam in Liberalism*: "Nowhere do I . . . ever claim that those who adopt Western identifications of gayness (or straightness, for that matter) among Palestinians (or Arabs or Muslims) are necessarily not anti-Occupation or that they are not part of the Palestinian struggle against Israeli colonialism. Those ideologically informed charges betray the inability of those who level them to make distinctions between adopting imperial epistemologies and ontologies on the one hand and remaining anti-imperialist politically on the other, a point I discuss in *Desiring Arabs* with regards to Islamist and secular nationalist Arabs, some of whom are complicit with gay *and* straight internationalism epistemologically but are anti-imperialist in their political stances" (Massad 2015, 256).
  49. I by-pass Massad's reference to a complicity "at the level of ontology," or his assertion that those who identify as gays, lesbians, or homosexuals in the Arab world "adopt an imperial ontology," for these are rather awkward formulations. I assume that what Massad means is that they adopt an imperial *understanding* of ontology: that is, an epistemology.
  50. This does not mean that *Terrorist Assemblages* and the concept of homonationalism have not been the targets of critique. I address some of these critiques later in this chapter. For now, let me just mention that some critics have found Puar's analysis unnecessarily paralyzing. Consider, as an example among others, Éric Fassin's following statement: "I/we do not want, or so I argue, the dominant discourse of sexual nationalisms to define my/our own discourse. I (at least) do not want this priority to determine all my positions. I do not want to abandon my commitment to sexual democracy, simply because this rhetoric has been appropriated for purposes that go against all my beliefs. I cannot be reduced to the mirror image of my enemies. I want to talk about sexual democracy, not just its instrumentalization. This is what critical thought is about. It is not merely about the denunciation of our opponents' positions, which would only amount to *criticism*. *Critique* also entails questioning the imposition of the very terms of debate" (Fassin 2011, 267). Fassin goes on lamenting that the debate about homonationalism often translates into a tendency to "absolve" heteropatrarchy in "Arab culture," a position he terms "culturalist" and firmly rejects (271-272). He made these remarks during the opening plenary of the now

infamous ‘Sexual Nationalisms’ conference, held in Amsterdam on January 27-28, 2011. In his remarks during the closing plenary, Didier Eribon expressed a position similar to Fassin’s, yet adopting a far more polemical tone. On the one hand, he suggested that the critique of homonationalism has been producing “academic slogans that do not have much to do with politics.” On the other hand, in his view, this academic mannerism is “always on the verge of becoming a queer-stalinism” (Eribon 2011). Unlike the polemics emerged around Massad’s work on the Gay International, these critiques do not concern the agency of LGBTQ formations in the Arab world or elsewhere in the global South (for this is not, indeed, a question raised by Puar’s analysis of homonationalism). If any agency is at stake in Fassin’s and Eribon’s critiques, it is the agency of Western LGBTQ formations. Their main concern seems to be the possibility of keep thinking and organizing around sexual politics in the wake of Puar’s critique.

51. Massad dismisses the delegation as part of “the recent trend of solidarity tourism to the West Bank that has become fashionable in liberal circles in Europe and the United States in the last decade” (Massad 2015, 271, n158). For a chronicle of the very emergence of the idea of a LGBTQ delegation to Palestine, see Sarah Schulman, *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International* (2012).
52. For the trajectory of the “Brand Israel” campaign, from its inception in 2005 to its progressive expansion to gays and lesbians in 2010-11, see Sarah Schulman, “A Documentary Guide to ‘Brand Israel’ and the Art of Pinkwashing” (2011). Schulman’s account also registers the explicit participation of LGBTQ formations in this expansion of the state campaign.
53. I do not question Puar’s (or anyone else’s) deployment of the concept in the context of Israel-Palestine. This charge was leveled at her by the organizers of a conference on ‘Fundamentalism and Gender’ held at the Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany, in 2010 (where she was invited as keynote speaker). These critics went as far as to argue that the context of Israel-Palestine has *no relation* with the “war on terror” launched by the United States in the aftermath of 9/11. For Puar’s own account of this incident, see her “Citation and Censorship: The Politics of Talking About the Sexual Politics of Israel” (2011). This is not the kind of expansion I mean to signal and criticize.

Rather, I question the *conceptual* expansion of homonationalism in Puar's interventions after *Terrorist Assemblages*.

54. Puar made this point at a workshop that took place during the conference 'Affect, Embodiment and Politics,' organized at the Universitat Autònoma of Barcelona, Spain, on February 12-14, 2015.
55. In registering this expansion of the concept of homonationalism, I rely in part on the analysis offered by C. Heike Schotten in "Homonationalism: From Critique to Diagnosis, or, We Are All Homonational Now" (2016). Schotten identifies three phases of what she regards as a transition from homonationalism as a "critique of politics" to homonationalism as a "diagnostic of international political relations." She names the three phases as follows: "homonationalism1," corresponding with the analysis developed by Puar in *Terrorist Assemblages*; "homonationalism1.5," marked by a first intervention by Mikdashi (2011) on *Jadaliyya*; and "homonationalism2," that is, the deployment of homonationalism as co-extensive with imperialism and as a "structure of modernity"—or, I suggest, as another name for biopolitics—to be found in Puar and Mikdashi's interventions on *Jadaliyya* as well as in Puar's subsequent writings. Schotten argues that, "in broadening its global reach, homonationalism becomes less important politically as either a distinct phenomenon or a specific target of resistance" (Schotten 2016, 362). Her primary concern is that this expansion makes the concept less useful for "a critical evaluation of activist movements" (366). Indeed, as the title of her essay suggests, the expansion of the concept implies that we are *all* homonationalist now. My concern, instead, has less to do with an "evaluation" of political organizing than with the problem of theoretical practice: how the concrete (including political organizing) can be appropriated in theory while preserving its differences and determinations.
56. In *Terrorist Assemblages*, Puar makes only brief and scattered references to Massad (Puar 2007, 27, 111, 140 n79). In a later essay, she cautiously takes some distance from Massad's analysis while suggesting, at the same time, that the emergence of any anti-imperialist alternative to the Gay International may be halted as long as sexuality continues to be privileged as a terrain of identification and political struggle: "while one may disagree with Joseph Massad's damning critique of the 'Gay International,' we would do

well to ask exactly how the ‘Queer International’ proposed by Sarah Schulman is an alternative or antidote to the Gay International. Is it the case that simply by virtue of being articulated through ‘queer’ rather than ‘gay,’ and through a global solidarity movement, that the pitfalls of the gay international are really avoided?” (Puar 2013b, 37) Sara Schulman formulates the idea of a “Queer International” in *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International*: “The Bolsheviks led the Third International—the global coalition of world communist organizations, but Leon Trotsky’s concept of permanent revolution led to the idealism of ‘the Fourth International,’ in response to Stalin’s corruption of revolutionary principle. In his book *Desiring Arabs*, Joseph Massad, a professor at Columbia University and a Palestinian, describes the ‘Gay International’ as a Western apparatus imposing concepts of homosexuality on Palestinian sex between men. All of these factors converged on my use of the ‘queer international,’ a worldwide movement that brings queer liberation and feminism to the principles of international autonomy from occupation, colonialism, and globalized capital” (S. Schulman 2012, 66). By suggesting that Schulman’s project reproduces the same pitfalls of the Gay International, Puar seems to align herself with Massad’s critique of *epistemic*, rather than *political* imperialism—indeed, with the argument (which Massad formulates against Puar in the first place) that no global circulation of sexuality can ever take place through non-imperialist channels. Mikdashi makes this point against Schulman in an earlier article that anticipated some of the arguments put forward by Puar and herself on *Jadaliyya*: “critics of pinkwashing who assume an international queer camaraderie repeat a central tenet of homonationalism: homosexuals *should* be in solidarity with and empathize with each other *because* they are homosexual” (Mikdashi 2011).

57. Importantly, Said observes that not only imperialism and anti-imperialist resistance, but the different resistances emerging across the imperial divide—by anticolonial intellectuals and movements in the Third World and by anticolonial Europeans in the metropolis—shared culture as a key terrain of struggle. As he puts it, “we should acknowledge that, at both ends of the redrawn map, opposition and resistance to imperialism are articulated together on a largely common although disputed terrain provided by culture” (Said 1993, 200). Thus, while Massad is concerned with exposing the

“epistemological complicity” with imperialism on the part of LGBTQ formations in the Arab world that are in fact politically embattled against imperial domination, the Said of *Culture and Imperialism* registers that “complicity” as his very starting point for an analysis of anti-imperialist resistance.

58. It is worth repeating that this statement is partly incorrect, for culture and ideology do not entirely overlap in Said’s analysis. In the passage I just quoted, for instance, he refers to culture as a theater where political and ideological struggles are articulated, thus making it clear that the terrain of culture is more circumscribed and differs from that of ideology in general. According to Said, as I read him, literary production is relatively autonomous not only from the political and the economic, but also from the terrain of ideology itself, for it possesses its own inner logics and goals: first and foremost, aesthetic pleasure. Yet this is fully compatible with Hall’s analysis of the articulations between the economic, the political, and the ideological. As I argued in the first chapter while discussing *Policing the Crisis*, not only each of these levels is relatively autonomous from the others, but also each apparatus operating at one level (for instance, the police as a state apparatus) functions in part according to its irreducible logics. In this view, approaching literature as an ideological formation does not mean abandoning a focus on its specific logics and rules (both those shaping the field as well as those governing each literary object). From a methodological and disciplinary perspective, this means that aesthetic questions concerning the literary object must be kept in tension with questions about the politico-economic (and ideological) context of its production and consumption. In *Orientalism*, Said suggests that this tension does not equal a trading of aesthetic analysis for politico-ideological critique. On the contrary, the tension supports a better understanding of literature itself, its production as a complex aesthetic field: “to believe that politics in the form of imperialism bears upon the production of literature, scholarship, social theory, and history writing is by no means equivalent to saying that culture is therefore a demeaned or denigrated thing. Quite the contrary: my whole point is to say that we can better understand the persistence and the durability of saturating hegemonic systems like culture when we realize that their internal constraints upon writers and thinkers were *productive*, not unilaterally inhibiting” (Said 1978a, 14).

59. In order to criticize Massad's overestimation of the power of the Gay International—that is, his indifference to concrete relations of force—Drucker deploys a similar logic: “In fact, the spread of lesbian/gay identities in the dependent world probably owes less to outside cultural influences than to social causes like mass migration to cities, more waged labor by women, higher wages, commodification of everyday life, assumption of some traditional family functions by the state, and the spread of modern medicine with its penchant for classification. The relative scarcity of lesbian/gay identities in Arab countries would then be due less to weaker European and North American influence (which seems doubtful) than to factors like the region's relatively low rate of female-paid employment” (Drucker 2008). Thus, ironically, even as Drucker seems to accuse Massad of “ideologism” (or at least culturalism), both authors implicitly share a rather economic approach to sexual formations.
60. That this quasi economic reading makes its appearance in the context of an interview, and that Massad's books and essays in general contradict it, does not undermine my argument. For, what I mean to identify is not a consistent (but untenable) *combination* of Foucault and economicism, but precisely the *contradictions* between the two approaches. Moreover, this specific passage was later incorporated by Massad in his *Islam in Liberalism* (2015, 221). Finally, in the context of her famous critique of Foucault and Deleuze, which primarily focused on a dialogue between the two rather than any of their major theoretical works, Gayatri C. Spivak wrote: “I have chosen this friendly exchange between two activist philosophers of history because it undoes the opposition between authoritative theoretical production and the unguarded practice of conversation, enabling one to glimpse the track of ideology” (Spivak 1988, 272). For the conversation in question, see Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, “Intellectuals and Power” (1977).
61. Said makes reference, in this passage, to Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* ([1969] 1972) and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* ([1975] 1977).
62. While in the previous passage from *Orientalism* Said claims to be drawing on Foucault's notion of discourse in general, mentioning both *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *Discipline and Punish*, in this later essay he posits a distinction within Foucault's own

theoretical trajectory: “The historical tendency that seems to me to have held Foucault in its grip intellectually and politically in his last years was one he perceived—incompletely, I think—as growing ever more coherent and unidirectional, and it is this tendency that carried him over from the differentiations and subtleties within power in *L’Ordre du discours* and *L’Archéologie du savoir* to the hypertrophied vision of power in later works like *Surveiller et punir* and volume 1 of *L’Histoire de la sexualité*” (Said 1986, 150-151).

63. After a discussion of Foucault, Said’s essay ends as follows: “It may seem an abrupt conclusion to reach, but the kinds of theory I have been discussing can quite easily become cultural dogma. Appropriated to schools or institutions, they quickly acquire the status of authority within the cultural group, guild, or affiliative family. Though of course they are to be distinguished from grosser forms of cultural dogma like racism and nationalism, they are insidious in that their original provenance—their history of adversarial, oppositional derivation—dulls the critical consciousness, convincing it that a once insurgent theory is still insurgent, lively, responsive to history” (Said 1983, 247). For Said’s partial rethinking of his pessimistic position regarding the traveling of theory, see “Traveling Theory Reconsidered” (1994). Note that this later essay, unlike the earlier one, does not mention Foucault but focuses exclusively on the circulations and appropriations of Lukács’ *History and Class Consciousness* ([1919-1923] 1971).
64. For an excellent analysis of both Said’s and Hall’s critiques of Foucault, which raises many of the questions I am raising here, see Enakshi Dua, “Not Quite a Case of the Disappearing Marx: Tracing the Place of Material Relations in Postcolonial Theory” (2014).
65. Foucault does offer some suggestions concerning the articulation of resistance. In his view, each point of application of power is also a point of support for resistance, and vice versa. Or, to be more precise, power *is* the relationship between power and resistance. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, he writes: “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. . . . [The] existence [of power relationships] depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations. These points of resistance are present

everywhere in the power network. Hence there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case” (Foucault [1976] 1978, 95-96). This understanding of the relations between power and resistance has paved the way for a long trajectory of feminist and queer theorizing trying to conceptualize resistance and transformation from a Foucauldian perspective. Perhaps the most consistent and well-known attempts in this direction are to be found in the works of Judith Butler, from *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (1993a), to *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (1997a).

66. I discuss Foucault’s critique of ideology in some more detail in chapter 1.
67. At the same time, Bernini notes Foucault’s exceptional reference, in the passage I just quoted, to the universal: “It seems as if Foucault, cornered by his obvious misreading [of the Iranian Revolution], in a public rather than academic intervention, feels obliged but also finally authorized to speak up once and for all: respect for each individual’s freedom is, for him, a non-negotiable standard of judgment. A universal, if you wish, but not an epistemic one: a principle that orients *praxis* even as it cannot be justified by *theoria*” (Bernini 2013, 201-202). All translations from Bernini’s essay are mine.
68. I discuss the notion of the specific intellectual in some more detail in chapter 1. In chapter 2, I briefly mention that also Ferguson (2010) is critical of the notion of the organic intellectual. However, he registers that the notion was profoundly reconceptualized by Hall and others at the CCCS in the context of Thatcherism. In that context, the need for organic intellectuals was as urgent as the need to undo the fiction of transparency between intellectual labor and the social and political field. In other words, following Ferguson, it is interesting to note that Hall shares some of Foucault’s critiques of the organic intellectual. Yet, as is the case with the concept of ideology, the same critiques lead Foucault to entirely abandon these Marxist concepts while Hall struggles to keep thinking on that terrain.
69. This does not mean that the specific intellectual willfully ignores the context in which resistance to power emerges. In fact, Foucault does offer a brief conjunctural reading of the Iranian revolution and its aftermath. Upon registering the religious element present in the

revolution from the start, he writes: “But should one have expected the religious element to quickly move aside in favor of forces that were more real and ideologies that were less ‘archaic’? Undoubtedly not, and for several reasons. First there was the rapid success of the movement, reconfirming it in the form it had just taken. There was the institutional solidity of a clergy whose sway over the population was strong, and whose political ambitions were vigorous. There was the whole context of the Islamic movement: with the strategic positions it occupies, the economic keys which Muslim countries hold, and its own expansionary force over two continents, it constitutes an intense and complex reality all around Iran. With the result that the imaginary contents of the revolt did not dissipate in the broad daylight of the revolution. They were immediately transposed to a political scene that seemed fully prepared to receive them but was actually of a completely different nature” (Foucault [1979] 2000, 451). Yet this passage, which pays some attention to the articulations between politico-economic forces and ideological formations, makes its appearance halfway through the article only to give way to a different question: “One does not dictate to those who risk their lives facing a power. Is one right to revolt, or not? Let us leave the question open. People do revolt; that is a fact. And that is how subjectivity (not that of great men [*sic*], but that of anyone) is brought into history, breathing life into it” (452).

70. The reference in this passage is to Foucault, “The Concern for Truth” ([1984] 1990, 265).
71. The reference in this passage is to Foucault, “The Confession of the Flesh” (1980, 199).
72. The conflict discussed by Ritchie in this essay in some ways resembles the “culture war” waged by conservative gay men against the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center in the late 1990s, mentioned in chapter 2.
73. Ritchie notes that among the “good queers” were also Urvashi Vaid, Lisa Duggan, and Jasbir Puar (Ritchie 2014, 2).
74. Importantly, in this essay Ritchie also deploys intersectionality against assemblage: “in opposition to Puar’s dismissal of it . . . I offer here [intersectionality] as a more productive framework for understanding the actual operations of power in diverse socio-historical contexts” (Ritchie 2014, 6). And again: “I employ an

intersectional approach that is less concerned with deconstructing identity categories than understanding how ‘particular values [are] attached to them and the way those values foster and create social hierarchies’ (Crenshaw 1991, 1297). . . . There are, after all, still some queers who cannot afford to ‘de-privilege the human body as a discrete organic thing’ (Puar 2012, 57), and they are constrained in their movements by overlapping structures and practices of power, which are best understood—and critiqued—not with recourse to totalizing theoretical catchwords but by understanding the circumstances of their emergence” (7). The references in this passage are to Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” (1991) and Puar, “‘I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess’: Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory” (2012). When Ritchie states that there are *still* some queers who cannot afford assemblage, he ironically reiterates the “residual” reading of intersectionality that Puar offers in the very same essay from which he quotes (see note 35). But his tone is obviously ironic and his comment is meant to signal the privileged position from which intersectionality can be dismissed as a theoretico-political devise.

75. Castro Varela and Dhawan offer the example of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, introduced under British colonial rule in 1860. See also note 44.
76. There are certain obvious imprecisions in this passage. These have to do with Castro Varela and Dhawan’s attempt, as I read it, to provide an account not so much of Puar’s or anyone else’s specific analysis, but of the circulation of such analyses and their hegemonic effects within contemporary queer theory and LGBTQ politics. First, they affirm that the queer of color diasporic subject is positioned as “victim” by queer of color and queer diasporic analyses in Europe and the United States, even as Puar (not to mention Massad) is actually interested in that subject’s complicity with the articulations of homonationalism and sexual imperialism. Second, Castro Varela and Dhawan tend to conflate Puar’s intervention with the broader field of queer of color and queer diasporic critique. But Puar’s analysis, as I have argued, to a significant extent departs from the theoretical practices of that field, especially through her theoretical undermining of intersectionality. Instead, queer of color critique—from Muñoz to Ferguson—is marked

by an intersectional attention to the articulations of racism within LGBTQ formations *and* the articulations of heteropatriarchy within communities of color (including antiracist political formations). The lack of this sort of multidirectional critique is precisely the target of Castro Varela and Dhawan's argument. Thus, their reference to the field of queer of color and queer diasporic critique as a whole and their mention, in this passage, of Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009), does not serve particularly well their critique of Puar.

77. The politics of same-sex marriage is the central topic of Castro Varela and Dhawan's essay. It is in the context of a discussion of same-sex marriage that they formulate their critique of queer of color and queer diasporic analyses.
78. In "Homonationalism and State-Phobia: The Postcolonial Predicament of Queering Modernities" (2016), Dhawan takes a step further. This essay reiterates a critique of both Puar and Massad, yet does not position them as representative of queer diasporic theoretico-political formations. This would establish a partition between such formations and LGBTQ formations in the global South, as her essay with Castro Varela tends to do. Here, instead, Dhawan highlights precisely the complex position of queer of color and queer diasporic formations in Europe and the United States, which Puar's and Massad's analyses, in her view, cannot account for: "Given the efforts by queer diasporas to fight racism in mainstream society and heteronormativity in antiracist politics, it is irresponsible to neglect the entanglements of racism and heterosexism by reducing one to being the cause of the other" (58). Moreover, looking at the other side of the transnational divide, Dhawan laments that "[w]ith the primary focus on 'Gay International' and Western 'homonationalism,' there is the risk of overlooking the well-funded campaigns in postcolonial countries by Western 'profamily' religious organizations to hinder progressive legislation or even to introduce coercive ones" (60-61). Thus, Dhawan points out that the complex terrain of sexual imperialism cannot be reduced to the operations of Massad's Gay International, but must include an account of the involvement of other formations, such as Western religious-based movements, in the reproduction of heteropatriarchy in the global South. Through the combination of these observations, Dhawan moves further in the direction of theorizing the articulations

between queer struggles in the global North and the global South. As the rest of this section illustrates, this direction is fully developed by Rahul Rao's work.

79. The essay is a modified version of the last chapter of Rao's book, titled *Third World Protest: Between Home and the World* (2010). The book itself, which I cannot discuss here, makes a number of arguments that are relevant to my discussion of homonationalism and sexual imperialism. Written within the field of international relations, its central goal is to explore "the mindsets, orientations, and background assumptions of political protest in the Third World" (5): what Rao terms "protest sensibilities." Its core argument is that communitarianism (or identity politics) and cosmopolitanism (or universalism) are *both* insufficient to account for the terrain of Third World political protest *and* often appear in articulation in the counter-ideologies articulated by Third World political movements. Thus, Rao analyzes a number of movements that are critical of both communitarianism and cosmopolitanism taken in isolation, for they "assume that threats to vital interests emanate from both outside and inside the nation-states with which they [identify]. This awareness induces a dual movement—a communitarian impulse to construct unified national political agency with a view to confronting an external threat, and a cosmopolitan inclination to deconstruct that community in an effort to civilize its exercise of disciplinary power vis-à-vis its own members" (8).
80. Speaking about motivations, Rao seems to suggest in this earlier essay that the subjects of his analysis can be regarded as fully rational actors. This allows Katerina Dalacoura (2014) to argue that Rao offers a humanist and materialist reading of the Gay International as an alternative to Massad's poststructuralist approach. Dalacoura's analysis of the differences between Rao and Massad—which she situates within a broader split between humanism/materialism and poststructuralism in postcolonial studies, traceable to Said's complex relationship with Foucault—is valuable in many respects. Yet by entirely collapsing materialism and humanism, she goes as far as to suggest that Rao, unlike Massad, posits "[t]he self-description of men and women in the Middle East as homosexual [as] . . . the result of choice by morally responsible individuals" (1301). However, Rao's work as a whole and especially his most recent analyses of

the Ugandan case—discussed later in this section—seem to question the assumption of such rational agents, and they do so precisely by deploying a materialist approach to hegemonic formations. Thus, not only but also in light of Rao’s later interventions, I read this earlier piece as emphasizing conflicting *interests*, rather than just motivations, across different segments of the Gay International.

81. Tatchell has been at the center of the debate on homonationalism and sexual imperialism from its inception. Puar discusses the politics of Tatchell and Outrage! in Britain as a key site of articulation of homonationalism (Puar 2007, 17-19). See also Jin Haritaworn, Tamsila Tauqir, and Esra Erdem, “Gay Imperialism: Gender and Sexuality Discourse in the ‘War on Terror’” (2008). For an account of Tatchell’s politics within Labour in the 1980s, see Lucy Robinson, *Gay Men and the Left in Post-War Britain* (2007), chapter 6.
82. Puar seems to suggest as much when she points out, in *Terrorist Assemblages*, that “homosexual subjects who have limited legal rights within the U.S. civil context gain significant representational currency when situated within the global scene of the war on terror” (Puar 2007, 4). However, Puar does not distinguish between right-wing and left-wing formations.
83. Rao makes a similar argument about international organizations such as Amnesty or Human Rights Watch, which equally “‘need’ human rights violations abroad as a reason for being, and have an interest in framing power struggles in different parts of the world as ‘rights violations’ with a view to sustaining particular programmes and campaigns” (Rao 2011, 55).
84. Interviewed by Rao, Tatchell dismisses such critiques as “animated by petty local turf rivalries,” arguing that the signing of the statement by members of Ugandan groups, for instance, “was precipitated by resentment that [Outrage!] worked with other groups in Uganda” (Rao 2011, 55). When David Kato, who was among the Ugandan signatories, was murdered in 2011, Tatchell did not hesitate to publicly state his admiration for Kato’s activism at the same time as he called on the Ugandan government to withdraw the Anti-Homosexuality Bill, hence ignoring Kato’s own critique of Tatchell’s campaigning on LGBT rights in Africa (Tatchell 2011). Rao is correct in pointing out that “Western activists derive significant non-material resources from their Third World interlocutors: a *raison d’être*, legitimation for

international activism, proof that their agenda remains unfulfilled, symbols for broader campaigns, prestige with their support base, etc.” (Rao 2011, 53). Yet, especially in the case of Tatchell, we may specify this argument to note that the extraction of such non-material resources can easily occur in the form of unilateral exploitation, rather than exchange.

85. See note 44.

86. See, for instance, Kapya Kaoma, *Globalizing the Culture Wars: U.S. Conservatives, African Churches, & Homophobia* (2009) and *Colonizing African Values: How the U.S. Christian Right is Transforming Sexual Politics in Africa* (2012). Kaoma, a Zambian pastor and scholar based in the United States, was the first to expose the links between the U.S. religious right and the contemporary rise of homophobia across African countries.

87. As Rao comments, African clergies may have even experienced their central role in the struggle over homosexuality within the Communion as “a belated moment of decolonisation” (Rao 2014, 193). For instance, he reports an account of the Conference provided by now-retired Archbishop of the Church of Uganda Livingstone Mpalanyi Nkoyoyo, in his authorized biography by Hamlet K. Mbabazi: “[S]ome bishops from western countries had a patronising attitude towards the African Church. On the one hand, they believed that Africans were incompetent in theological reflection and, therefore, not qualified to contribute to the development of Anglican theology. An impression was being made that in the same way the African church received the faith from western churches, they were obliged to endorse the compromises that the western church had, in many places, taken on board against the teaching of the Holy Bible. [Nkoyoyo] recalls that there was also a general feeling that the African church was severely impoverished, and largely dependent upon western aid for her development activities. It was believed that this dependency did not give her the authority to take a strong stand in defence of the scriptures. . . . The main question that he, and other Ugandan bishops anticipated was whether the belief and practice of the Anglican Communion would be based upon the teaching of the scriptures or whether it would be determined by the practices that had come to be accepted in western culture” (Mbabazi, quoted in Rao 2014, 192-193).

88. In his essay, Rao discusses other instances of stances against

homophobia recently articulated by international financial institutions, most importantly the World Bank's attempts to build economic cases for LGBT rights. For instance: "[The Bank's] 2014 report estimating the cost of homophobia to the Indian economy . . . is revealing of the Bank's emerging interest in queer sexuality. The basic argument is simple enough. Homophobia imposes avoidable costs on economies by lowering productivity and output as a result of employment discrimination, reducing investment in human capital as a result of discrimination in education, and widening health disparities between heterosexual and queer people thanks to the disproportionate risk of HIV/AIDS, violence, depression and suicide borne by the latter. . . . There is something profoundly troubling about a strategy that makes respect for personhood contingent on the promise of that person's productivity were their personhood to be fully recognized" (Rao 2015, 41).

89. Rao's explicit reference, in this passage, is to the debate between Butler and Fraser on redistribution and recognition, discussed at the beginning of the second chapter. Rao questions both Butler's and Fraser's positions in that debate, as I do, through Duggan's analysis of homonormativity. The latter shows that neither do queer struggles necessarily undermine the structures of capitalism, nor can recognition and redistribution be considered as disarticulated terrains of struggle indifferent to one another: "As Duggan explains it, neoliberals blunted the sharp edge of progressive critique by recognizing claims to equality while minimizing potential redistributive consequences: in essence, they embraced a non-redistributive identity politics. The distinction between recognition and redistribution, far from marking a real separation between different kinds of injustices as suggested by Fraser, is essentially the ruse through which neoliberal capitalism pretends to become more inclusive" (Rao 2015, 44). However, Rao departs not only from Butler and Fraser, but also from Duggan. In his view, Duggan's analysis is limited by a certain voluntarism, in that "the argument proceeds as if things might have turned out differently if only these agents [queers and their putative enemies, both neoliberals and religious conservatives] had thought or acted in ways other than those in which they actually did" (44). Most importantly, according to Rao, "we are tempted to fantasize that if LGBT movements had refused the recognition/redistribution

distinction, they might not have succumbed to homonormativity in the way they did” (44). It is in order to challenge these presumptions that he focuses on the material conditions for the production and circulation of homophobic ideology, turning to the role played by structural adjustments in reshaping the Ugandan social formation. However, this critique of Duggan seems to by-pass the problem of ideology altogether. If homonormativity is read not as a “thing” to which LGBTQ movements “succumbed,” but as a concept (an abstraction) by which we can name an ideological formation in whose emergence those movements are implicated—where ideology is understood not as a smokescreen that simply “tricks” people, but as a process productive of common sense—then the analysis of homonormativity need not be grounded on the voluntarism of which Rao is rightfully suspicious.

90. Rao’s reference is to the analysis proposed by Joanna Sadgrove, Robert M. Vanderbeck, Johan Andersson, Gill Valentine, and Kevin Ward in “Morality Plays and Money Matters: Towards a Situated Understanding of the Politics of Homosexuality in Uganda” (2012). As I mentioned, in “Global Homocapitalism” he also makes explicit reference to the analysis of the mugging panic developed by Hall *et al.* in *Policing the Crisis* (1978).
91. LGBT couples are now defined by the law as “specific social formations” rather than families, and the article on stepchild adoption was scrapped which would have allowed one member of a registered couple to legally adopt his or her partner’s children. This article was subject to particularly intense debates during the process that led to the passing of the law.
92. For different histories of the European construction against its own South and East, see Roberto M. Dainotto, *Europe (In Theory)* (2007); Franco Cassano, *Southern Thought and Other Essays on the Mediterranean* ([1996] 2012), Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (1997), and Milica Bakić-Hayden, “Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia” (1995).
93. All translations from Italian texts in this section, when not specified otherwise, are mine.
94. See the massive investigative report (in Italian), titled “Di chi parliamo quando parliamo di gender” (Who Are We Talking About When We Talk About Gender), published by De Guerre on his

- blog: <https://playingthegendercard.wordpress.com/di-chi-parliamo-quando-parlano-di-gender/> (accessed January 15, 2017).
95. These are the magazine *Notizie ProVita* (ProLife News) and the association Giuristi per la Vita (Jurists for Life) (Prearo and De Guerre 2016).
  96. The two analyses indeed come together in a forthcoming French publication by Garbagnoli and Prearo, titled *La croisade “anti-genre”* (2017).
  97. The subtitle of Bernini’s article recalls Joan W. Scott’s essay “The Uses and Abuses of Gender” (2013), in which Scott addresses the anti-gender campaign in France.
  98. The Italian “thought of sexual difference” is an approach developed especially by the philosophical community Diotima, based in Verona. It is the Italian equivalent of the school of thought developed in France by Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, and Julia Kristeva.
  99. The text of the letter (in Italian) is available at: [http://www.immaginiamicheravenna.it/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/LetteraSIS\\_genere.pdf](http://www.immaginiamicheravenna.it/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/LetteraSIS_genere.pdf) (accessed January 15, 2017).
  100. The first translation of a collection of French materialist feminist essays took place only recently, edited by Garbagnoli and Vincenza Perilli and titled *Non si nasce donna. Percorsi, testi e contesti del femminismo materialista in Francia* (One is not Born a Woman: Trajectories, Texts, and Contexts of Materialist Feminism in France) (2013).
  101. The references in this passage are to Colette Guillaumin, *Racism, Sexism, Power and Ideology* (1995) and Monique Wittig, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (1992).
  102. The reference to Gramsci is made explicit in a later essay by Zappino alone, titled “Sovversione dell’eterosessualità” (The Subversion of Heterosexuality) (2015).
  103. Butler herself engages with the anti-gender campaign in chapter 9 of her *Undoing Gender* (2004b).
  104. This point is particularly relevant, for Zappino and Ardilli’s intervention is also informed by contemporary critiques of homonormativity, homonationalism, and sexual imperialism. This aspect becomes more evident in a later volume edited by Zappino alone, titled *Il genere tra neoliberalismo e neofondamentalismo* (Gender Between Neoliberalism and Neofundamentalism) (2016). The idea of a collective volume took shape in the wake of Zappino and Ardilli’s intervention and in the more specific context of an activist meeting called *Gender Panic!*, organized in Bologna in December 2015. The

goal of the meeting was to elaborate a radical queer response to the conservative anti-gender campaign. In the same spirit of the meeting, the scope of the volume is to reaffirm feminist and queer critiques of liberal sexual politics rather than retreat on a centrist terrain in the face of the attack on “gender.” In other words, the problematic informing the book is how to respond to the neofundamentalist attack without colluding with neoliberal promises of equality. As Zappino puts it in the introduction, “the paradox of this crusade is that it forces us to resist, yet without desisting” (16). However, the formulation of this problematic tends to sever the concrete links between neoliberalism and neofundamentalism. To be sure, Zappino insists that the two seemingly opposite formations in fact converge. In his view, they do so to the extent that neofundamentalism struggles to re-hierarchize differences while neoliberalism proceeds to naturalize them. In either case, social differences are subtracted from the field of political struggle. Yet this analysis locates neofundamentalism and neoliberalism as the Scylla and Charybdis of contemporary queer politics, rather than defining the concrete terrains on which they might diverge and converge. In other words, the imperative of resisting collusion and reaffirming a queer critique of neoliberalism in the face of the conservative war on “gender ideology” takes over, sidelining a conjunctural analysis of the specific location of sexual politics in the contemporary European periphery.

105. See also the volume edited by Eszter Kováts and Maari Põim, *Gender as Symbolic Glue: The Position and Role of Conservative and Far Right Parties in the Anti-Gender Mobilizations in Europe* (2015) and Weronika Grzebalska, “Anti-Genderism and the Crisis of Neoliberal Democracy” (2016).
106. Bernini recalls Butler’s own stance on this matter: “By insisting that this will be a persistent and open question, I mean to suggest that we make no decision on what sexual difference is but leave that question open, troubling, unresolved, propitious” (Butler 2004b, 191-192).
107. The rupture took place on social media.
108. The series of counter-conferences was organized by the LGBTQIAEF Committee Giordana Bruna, which was formed specifically to counter the advancement of the anti-gender movement in Verona. See the website of the Committee: <http://comitatagiordanabruna.blogspot.nl/> (accessed January 15, 2017).

## *Conclusion*

1. Hall's argument bears some obvious resemblances with Jacques Derrida's analysis of the transformations taking place in the intellectual and political fields after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, in *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* ([1993] 1994).
2. The conversation between Laclau and Hall took place during an episode of the TV program "Diálogos con Laclau." Broadcasted on Argentinian television in 2011, the program consisted of ten episodes, each of them staging a conversation between Laclau and another contemporary critical thinker. The other guests, besides Hall, were Toni Negri, Étienne Balibar, Chantal Mouffe, Horacio González, Gianni Vattimo, Doreen Massey, Jorge Alemán, Judith Revel, and Jacques Rancière. Thanks to German Eduardo Primera Villamizar for bringing this conversation between Hall and Laclau to my attention.



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