SEXING UP THE INTERNATIONAL

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis takes sexuality as its subject matter and uses a methodology informed by postcolonial studies to explore new possibilities for thinking about the international, its construction, and its contemporary politics. I argue that postcolonial readings of sexuality can impel us to rethink the meanings and politics of international theory and to challenge notions that have come to appear fixed and unchanging. The thesis canvasses how such an intervention might occur – calling especially for a focus on the local and the everyday – and considers both the utility and the limits of the contributions sexuality might make to a rethinking of international theory.

My arguments are made with reference to a series of specific examples from contemporary East and Southeast Asia: the nationalistically imbued gendered and sexed figures of the national serviceman and the Singapore Girl in Singapore; the political and social repercussions of the trial of former Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on charges of sodomy; newly emerging homosexual identities in Hong Kong; and the connections between sexuality and disease that inform the Thai response to HIV/AIDS.

These case studies exemplify some of the ways in which sexuality can work to recast traditional scholarly understandings of the international. They also illuminate a series of aspects that shape the encounter between sexuality and the international, encompassing issues of nationalism, globalization, metaphor, spatiality and knowledge politics. Through my analysis of these issues, I argue for a broadening out of the source materials that inform knowledge about the international and the pursuit of alternative modes of reading processes of international change and exchange. I contend that scholarship of the international needs to pay more attention to instances where the borders separating everyday, national and international spaces break down, and where we might detect new forms of knowledge about the nature, politics and functioning of the international realm.

DECLARATION

This is to certify that

1. the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD except where indicated in the Preface

2. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

3. the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

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SIMON BENJAMIN OBENDORF

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[H]e wondered why, as long as the author was being so clever, he had not pushed his theory a bit further and maintained that every instance in life is a manifestation of sexual desire. If he had carried his doctrine this far, he probably could have used the same reasoning to demonstrate that sexual desire permeates everything…If we observe life through the lens of sexual desire, the driving force behind every human act is no more than sexual yearning.

Ogai Mori, *Vita Sexualis*

INTRODUCTION

The title of this thesis – *Sexing up the International* - is intentionally mischievous. On one level, it provides a simple description of the thesis' intellectual project: an attempt to show how materials on sex and sexuality can usefully be brought into dialogue with the theories that describe and call into being those spaces collectively known as "the international". But the title's reference to "sexing up" also implies a more controversial series of processes. To sex something up is to alter its presentation or language in order to subvert its meaning.[1] Following this definition, "sexing up the international", refers here to the ways in which those knowledges created by mainstream understandings of international processes and spaces might appear differently when read in concert with materials on sex and sexuality. Taking the pun still further, the title signals the powerful forces of social, political and discursive transformation that are unleashed when sex enters the realms of public affairs and theoretical debate. As such, it indicates the possibility for materials on sex and sexuality to provide new and different ways of thinking about and theorising the international.

This is a novel undertaking. Whether as international relations, world politics or as theories of globalisation, intellectual study of the international has thus far shown a remarkable lack of interest in addressing matters of sex. In both academic writing and in political practice the international has been defined as a sort of "gated community" (be it an anarchic realm, a space regulated by liberal values, or a domain shaped by the exigencies of global capital) and open to habitation by a strictly limited suite of actors and institutions. Ideas about sexuality, or the lived, bodily experience of sex, are almost never raised within disciplinary forums. Strict distinctions are maintained between those processes and institutions regarded as legitimate subjects of inquiry and those phenomena deemed trivial, unimportant or simply too difficult - and therefore to be kept outside the boundaries of disciplinary purview. These techniques of abstraction and simplification render dissent from existing models and understandings difficult and help ensure that new approaches and materials remain marginalised within existing disciplinary structures or banished

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[1] The phrase entered the vocabulary of mainstream political commentary in late 2003, when allegations were raised that the British government had altered the wording and language of intelligence reports in order to justify the United Kingdom's involvement in the Iraq War.

from their fold.

My task here is to think about the international from a different perspective and with reference to different materials. At its simplest, this involves asking a question which, although it informs and underlies almost all academic work in areas such as international relations, international studies or globalization studies, is very often regarded as *a priori* and settled. How is that imagined space that we call "the international" produced, given meaning and packaged for consumption?[2] The relevance of such a question appears self-evident. Yet the intellectual dominance of positivist and rationalist approaches to international theory and the rejection (or at least scepticism towards) reflective and postpositivist viewpoints on the part of mainstream disciplinary approaches means that, for most practitioners and students of international politics, the issues raised by such questions are regarded as being already largely resolved. Even where academic debate occurs, it is usually presented as being "in house": between different schools or traditions, and based on shared assumptions. In this thesis, I set these assumptions, and the processes of disciplinary gatekeeping that have insulated them from challenge, squarely in my sights.

At the core of my arguments, then, is a questioning of the ways in which the international is, and should be, theorised. The intervention I set out to make takes sexuality as its subject matter and uses a methodology informed by postcolonial studies in order to explore new possibilities for thinking through issues about the international: its construction and its contemporary politics. In many projects of this nature, it is the interstitial spaces and multiple points of connection between diverse sets of materials that enables critical investigation. Yet both sexuality studies and studies of the international have developed so independently of each other that the space between them resembles not so much a crevice as a chasm. For international studies, a systematic engagement with sexuality will probably appear as a new and radical starting point, unsettling of disciplinary orthodoxies and to be quickly brought within the fold of established methodologies and approaches.[3] On the other hand, while studies of sexuality have always taken the study of international flows as a legitimate subject of enquiry, they have not to date engaged seriously with the way in which sexuality has been deployed as a tool through which persons, institutions, and

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[2] I use the term "imagined" in the way suggested by Benedict Anderson's groundbreaking study of the emergence of nationalism, not to indicate a fictive space, but rather one that is "imagined" into being as a product of shared beliefs, perceptions and practises. See: Benedict R. O. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

[3] Cynthia Weber, "IR: The Resurrection or New Frontiers of Incorporation," *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 4 (1999).

nations have negotiated their often complex relations with the international. Recent developments at the margins of both sexuality studies and postcolonial studies have, however, gestured towards the possibility for these schools of thought to contribute to a project of rethinking international politics and processes. Exemplary of this is a recent special issue of the journal *GLQ,* where the editors argued that, "[i]f sex can learn from globalization and transnationalism, these schools have much to gain from critical studies of sex".[4] Similarly, postcolonialism has begun, if somewhat tentatively, to contribute towards a critical rethinking of disciplines such as international relations, globalization studies and transnational economics, with one author writing that postcolonial critique offers the possibility of retelling the story of the international "from the ground up, emphasizing the local, the ordinary and the discrete."[5] Yet in the case of both of these nascent interventions – sexual and postcolonial – it must be said that the intellectual returns thus far have been slim. For postcolonialism, a proclivity for negative criticism combined with an innate scepticism regarding dominant discursive structures has meant that although there has been much talk of the potential for change, so far little has actually been accomplished. Sexuality studies, meanwhile, have tended to focus on the ways in which sexualities have been shaped and reshaped by transnational processes and global flows but have rarely sought to intervene in debates over the constitution of international domains or the nature of global politics.

Yet postcolonialism and the study of sexuality each hold out great promise to a project of rethinking international theory. They draw our attention to the everyday lives and grounded realities of individual sexed bodies, embedded in discrete societies and cultures that have had to negotiate a world shaped and reshaped by flows of European imperialism and Western cultural, financial and military hegemony. They give us a glimpse into the ways international politics are inscribed in the personal and the everyday; a vision that often sharply diverges from the ways such politics are characterised in academic forums or in the corridors of global power. One of my tasks here is to ask how this could be read as a form of everyday theorising about the international; one which might prompt a significant rethinking about the epistemological adequacy and intellectual primacy of established disciplinary approaches.

There is a great deal of literature which explores the ways in which everyday life can be

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[4] Elizabeth A. Povinelli and George Chauncey, "Thinking Sexuality Transnationally," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 5, no. 4 (1999): 445.
[5] Phillip Darby, "Reconfiguring "The International": Knowledge Machines, Boundaries and Exclusions," *Alternatives* 28 (2003): 142.

read as a site of political and social organisation.[6] Michel de Certeau, in his magisterial *The Practice of Everyday Life*, presents everyday human actions, repetitive and largely subconscious, as providing opportunities both for grassroots theorising and for the tactical navigation and resistance to various regimes of power.[7] In doing so, de Certeau argues, new vantage points from which to view systems that exercise hegemonic power can be attained. These viewpoints can in turn contribute to the inscription of new forms of knowledge. In this thesis, I explore these processes through materials that are very much drawn from the contemporary moment. Yet my arguments here also shed light on the fact that the turn to sexuality to explain the international is very much conditioned by the colonial, precolonial and even mythical/imagined pasts of the societies, individuals and polities from which my examples are drawn.[8] This is in accordance with the method suggested by de Certeau, who sees the attempt to attain personal autonomy, "the effort to delimit one's own place in a world bewitched by the invisible powers of the Other", as providing a degree of mastery over time; the ability to selectively read the past as an archival resource for the present and to begin to describe and imagine alternative futures.[9] It is perhaps difficult to imagine a more hegemonic series of power structures than the nation-state, dominant conceptions of international order or the seemingly inescapable reach of transnational economics. Following de Certeau, I explore the reach of these categories. But more importantly, I also explore their incommensurabilities and the resistances they engender – what Partha Chatterjee might term the "politics of the governed" - in and through everyday practises of sex and sexuality.[10]

Postcolonial readings of sexuality can help illustrate the reach and impact of such international processes. But they can go further and accomplish more. They can impel us to rethink the meanings and politics of international theory; to challenge or subvert notions that have come to appear fixed and unchanging. This thesis seeks to develop the potential of postcolonialism and sexuality studies to transform our understandings of the international. But in doing so, it seeks to go beyond the mere identification of possibilities for change, to explore exactly *how* an intervention into international theory under these rubrics might proceed, and to identify the sorts of insights and

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[6] For an overview of such work, see: Ben Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2002). Other key references include: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak : Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

[7] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 36-37.

[8] See: Ashis Nandy, "History's Forgotten Doubles," *History and Theory* 34, no. 2 (1995), Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), ix-xx.

[9] de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 36.

[10] Partha Chatterjee, *Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004).

disciplinary transformations with which it might provide us. Wanting to be more than a hectoring critique of extant disciplinary shortfallings in international theory, it rather attempts to positively contribute to new ways of thinking about and theorising the international.

This immediately raises questions about materials and methodology. The influence of postcolonialism will be apparent here, informing my choice of illustrative materials as well as providing an intellectual framework for my arguments. But let us address these issues in turn. When it comes to materials, the thesis explores a series of specific examples – all of them drawn from contemporary East and Southeast Asia – where debates over sex and sexuality have become entangled with international issues. These case studies, from varying cultures, societies and nations, can be read as exemplifying some of the ways in which sexuality can recast, and even reconfigure, traditional scholarly understandings of the international. The sheer economic and cultural vibrancy of the Asian region, while less often held out these days as a "miraculous" success story of global economics, still ensures that Asia is a space where global flows of people, capital, ideologies and politics mix, and where difference has to be negotiated on a daily basis.[11] Underlying and contributing to this economic narrative are of course a plethora of stories about individual and societal experiences of colonialism, about the struggle to attain political independence and statehood, to craft nations and states and to negotiate modernity and postcoloniality in a world and a region which continues to be dominated by Western capital and military power. The identities and practises that emerge in this crucible of globalization and postcoloniality reflect broader processes and can tell us something significant about the politics of the contemporary international. Focusing on Asia offers the dual benefits of providing the thesis with some degree of geographical and thematic coherence while still allowing me to demonstrate the applicability of my arguments and approach in different circumstances, across and between cultural and national boundaries.

Each of the chapters that make up the thesis addresses specific and particular occurrences from differing Asian societies and cultures. This emphasis on the everyday, the specific and the particular contributes in no small part to the novelty of my approach. At the same time, though, reading these individual case studies together can help sketch out the architecture and framework of a new approach to international theory. Indeed, those working on gender and sexuality in East and

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[11] The emergence of ideas about an Asian economic miracle can be traced to this report: World Bank, *The East Asian Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press for the World Bank, 1993). For more critical readings of the "miracle" and its unravelling see: Gerald Tan, *The End of the Asian Miracle?: Tracing Asia's Economic Transformation* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1999), Bernard Arogyaswamy, *The Asian Miracle, Myth, and Mirage: The Economic Slowdown Is Here to Stay* (Westport and London: Quorum Books, 1998).

Southeast Asia have called for precisely this form of critical focus on the region, arguing that this can and should contribute to the task of "problematizing naïve and uncritical writing on globalization."[12] The colonial histories of sex and sexuality in Asian nations and societies and the contemporary postcolonial consumption and deployment of those histories provides a rich sourcebook from which a contrapuntal reading of the international – reading new materials against the grain of established disciplinary approaches – can be attempted.[13]

I have divided the thesis into two parts, each with an introductory overview that sets the scene for the arguments I advance. In the first, I focus primarily on the postcolonial state: its nationalisms, politics, and its external relations. I examine different aspects of the city-state of Singapore, a comparatively young country renowned for its social controls, overt nation-building policies and its preoccupation with notions of nationalism, security and sovereignty. To an extent, this is familiar territory. The state is, of course, the primary unit of most traditional international analysis, and issues of sovereignty and defence are grist to the mill of most mainstream international theory. In this first section, though, I am concerned to see how these traditional notions are understood, and how they are both consumed and resisted, within the Singaporean state. I start with an example of the important roles that nationalistically defined gendered roles and their attendant "authorised" sexualities are called upon to play, both within Singapore society and for the project of Singaporean nation-building. I explore the ways in which these categories are shaped and transformed by international processes and identify the tools they offer individual gendered and sexed subjects to comprehend, intervene in or negotiate international processes and issues. Given the wide range of theorising from within feminist international relations and transnational gender studies, starting with gender allows me both to overview existing literature of interest to my project as well as to delineate my own argumentative and methodological approach.

Two linked chapters form the bulk of this part. The first of these examines the construction of a form of martial hetero-patriarchal masculinity through the phenomenon of universal male military conscription in Singapore. It examines how ideas about appropriate gendered and sexual behaviour, and attempts to enforce these within domestic Singaporean society,

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12 Mark Johnson, Peter Jackson, and Gilbert Herdt, "Critical Regionalities and the Study of Gender and Sexual Diversity in South East and East Asia," *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 2, no. 4 (2000): 372.
13 The idea of a contrapuntal reading is Said's. He writes: "A comparative or, better, a contrapuntal, perspective is required in order to see a connection between coronation rituals in England and the Indian durbars of the late nineteenth century. That is, we must be able to think through and interpret together experiences that are discrepant, each with its particular agenda and pace of development, its own internal formations, its internal coherence, and system of external relationships, all of them coexisting and interacting with others." Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 32.

are in fact representative of far broader debates (by both political elites and the grassroots citizenry) about national security and international prestige and legitimacy. The second of the linked chapters focuses on the Singapore Girl, both the brand image created to sell seats on the state-owned flag carrier Singapore Airlines, but also the reality of those women who deliver customer service on Singapore Airlines' flights according to the Orientalised and sexualised specifications derived from the brand advertising. It explores how gender and sexuality have been commodified by the state as a resource to attract overseas investment, promote customer loyalty for the hugely successful airline and to contribute to national economic, diplomatic and strategic objectives. It goes on to explore the ways in which the drawing of connections between the Singapore Girl and international flows of money, travel and social mobility contribute to coercive attempts to achieve "brand purity" but contrarily, also provide for the possibility of dissent and resistance to hegemonic regimes of gender and sexuality. In doing so, I argue, they help show us how individual subjects utilise nationalistically infused and transnationally impacted ideas about sexuality and gender in order to arrive at personal understandings of international realms and their politics.

While the concept of the state continues to be of importance to Part Two of the thesis, my concern here is with readings of the international *beyond* the state. I explore three very different case studies, each of which allows us to see the role of the state and the functioning of a state-based international system in a quite different light. Indeed, the studies in Part Two work in dialogue with the earlier materials and provide signposts towards new ways of thinking about the external realm we know as "the international". And while materials on sexuality take centre-stage within this section, each of the constituent chapters takes on a different thematic flavour.

Chapter Five addresses the role of metaphor in coding understandings about the international. It focuses on the events surrounding the arrest, trial and imprisonment of former Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on charges of corruption and sodomy. Here I explore the ways in which diverse (and often divergent) ideas about a sexual act - sodomy - came to stand as a metaphor for processes as wide-ranging as the interference of the International Monetary Fund, currency speculation, and the influence of Western values on Malaysian society. Sodomy was asserted here as a boundary between the West and the non-West, deployed by political elites for domestic political gain, but picked up and utilised by everyday Malaysian citizens, often in ways quite different from those that the government had intended. I also draw upon the similiarities between the construction of colonial Malayan subjectivities by British administrations in the Straits

Settlements and those pursued by postcolonial leaders such as Mahathir Mohamad in his attempts to create the "New Malay". Sexual metaphors, I assert, provide a powerful (if not always predictable) vocabulary that acts to shape the ways in which the international is understood and debated.

If my materials on Malaysia are about a sexual *act*, in Chapter Six I am concerned with sexual *identity*. I look to Hong Kong and the emergence there of new homosexual identities, many of which are explicitly configured either as explicitly non-Western or in dialogue with Western forms of sexual identity. Rejecting concepts from Western gay liberation movements such as "coming out" as a political strategy, some Chinese activists are now speaking instead of "coming home": of integrating homosexual identities and sexual practices within institutions such as the Chinese family. Here my concern is to explore the impact of spatiality on the ways in which international meanings are created and consumed. I explore how sexuality and the body have become sites where globalization and currents of international political change are both resisted and embraced. My analysis asks to what extent the duration of British colonialism or Hong Kong's perpetual status as a colony might help explain this process. Does the fact that similar identities are also emerging in Taipei (capital of a Taiwan whose sovereignty is contested) and Shanghai (emerging global powerhouse and located within a Special Economic Zone of the People's Republic of China) point to the significance of a compromised nationalism or statehood in enabling such sexual activism? Throughout the chapter I reflect on what role the city - especially the global city – might play in these processes. The international realm, I argue, appears very differently from the changing spaces of the global city and from the range of personal standpoints provided by the various sexual identities the city helps create.

In the final substantive chapter, I look to Thailand to engage directly with the nature of knowledge about the international. I explore how a reading of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) epidemic can show how knowledge about the international spreads globally and how new knowledges about the international are emerging at the interface of sexuality, disease and globalism. The chapter further examines how HIV and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) have themselves been an engine of globalization, spreading ideas about sexual identity and behaviour as well as reforming concepts of sexual morality, state responsibility and the navigations of postcolonial modernity and globalization. What constructs are issues national HIV prevention strategies based upon? And if HIV is characterised as the Western or the global epidemic, what

ramifications does this have for local communities and individuals in their dealings both with the disease and with broader currents of transnational change?

I draw these chapters together in my concluding remarks. I consider how this project might have taken on a very different aspect had it addressed its arguments to how sexuality has informed the language and representations of military intervention and its critiques (about which there is an extensive literature). I sketch out one example of the connections between security issues and sexuality in order to signal both the importance and magnitude of such analysis, and to differentiate my own methodology. I will be arguing that the approach I have outlined – an examination of specific, grounded instances where sexuality invokes or shapes international meanings – should have a profound impact on the ways we think about the international and its meanings. Under my analysis, the international emerges not just as a product of scholarly abstraction or political, military and diplomatic manoeuvres but from the realms of everyday life and social practise – exemplified in my reading by the domain of sexuality. Rather than possessing a limited range of fixed meanings, the international appears more in the nature of what Ernesto Laclau might term an "empty signifier", a concept whose absence of specific meaning provides great opportunities for political agency and resistance. The lack of certainty over definitions, and the multiplicity of contingent social, cultural and even personal imaginings of the international, will require of international theory far greater flexibility and openness than it currently exhibits. We must take seriously the agency of individuals and the meanings derived from the cultures and societies they inhabit. This does not necessarily mean a complete disavowal of those structures of state behaviour or of the ways in which the international arena has been characterised in theory to date. But it does require acknowledgement that the dominant structures and processes communicated, created or enabled by current international theory and practise also inform certain kinds of agency and resistance on the part of those whose lives they affect. Starting at the margins – in the Asian postcolony and with materials such as sexuality – enables this process to be more clearly seen than would be the case of a similar study of the developed West. I examine the ways in which this theoretical intervention might proceed, cautioning against approaches that would rob materials from everyday life of their social and cultural peculiarities. I also look beyond the use of materials on sexuality, arguing that my approach here could have significant benefits for those seeking to examine the ways in which other facets of everyday life reach out into, and attempt to reshape, the international.

If sexualities in contemporary Asia form the subject matter of this thesis, postcolonialism is the major intellectual tradition underpinning its methodological approach. It is important at this early stage to identify the politically and socially normative nature of much postcolonial enquiry. Simon During has identified two strands within contemporary postcolonial discourse: a radical tradition that seeks to uncover specific, non-Western alternatives to modernity and a reconciliatory approach that seeks to explain and resolve issues arising from the interaction between the West and its others, both historically and in the contemporary world.[14] While each of these strands has its supporters and its detractors, it is easy to see that there is a shared core of postcolonialism, based around a critical engagement with the politics of resistance and domination that characterised the colonial encounter and with the legacies of that encounter in the contemporary world.[15] Postcolonialism takes an activist approach to issues.[16] It attempts to do more than merely describe the histories and impacts of colonialism. Postcolonial studies seek to chart new possibilities and alternative futures for those whose lives have been transformed by, and in the aftermath of, the colonial encounter. Further, they demand of intellectual enquiry and academic theory a rigorously critical and self-reflexive stance, an open-hearted commitment to a dialogue with difference and the taking of ethical responsibility for the effects of one's own scholarship and personal practise.[17]

While postcolonialism's early disciplinary development was based around the examination of specific, embedded accounts of individual actions, cultural processes and the ways in which these localised accounts could reflect broader political and social patterns, recent trends have seen the specific and the local accorded a lesser status.[18] Key here has been the influence of postmodernism. In many ways this has had a positive impact, encouraging a resistance towards thinking in terms of easy binaries and fostering a critical awareness of the varied, conditional and often contradictory forces which act upon and construct, politics, ideas and subjectivities.[19] Yet some of the strongest

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[14] Simon During, "Postcolonialism and Globalization: Towards a Historicization of Their Inter-Relation," *Cultural Studies* 14, no. 3/4 (2000).

[15] Gyan Prakash, "Postcolonial Criticism and Indian Historiography," *Social Text* 31/32 (1992).

[16] Arif Dirlik, "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism," *Critical Inquiry* 20 (Winter) (1994). See also: Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1998), Chapter 3.

[17] See, for instance, Spivak's discussion of ethical singularity in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Echo," *New Literary History* 24 (1993): 32. See also her treatment of difference in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "How to Teach a Culturally Different Book," in *The Spivak Reader*, ed. Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean (New York and London: Routledge, 1996).

[18] Phillip Darby, "Postcolonialism," in *At the Edge of International Relations: Postcolonialism, Gender and Dependency*, ed. Phillip Darby (London and New York: Pinter, 1997), 15.

[19] Ibid., 14.

critics of postcolonial studies have argued that this approach has been carried too far, leaving postcolonialism largely evacuated of politics, its theorising detached from the realities it purports to explain and dismissive of locally embedded cultures, politics and identities.[20]

Such critiques of postcolonialism are important to the arguments I advance here. Arif Dirlik argues that postcolonialism has lost its ability to promote radical change by narrowing its focus to issues such as ethnicity and race and thus losing the ability to address, let alone influence, debates which touch on such politically potent sites as nation, political power and class.[21] Harootunian has also castigated postcolonialism for its failures to engage with disciplinary structures of area studies and transnational relations. He argues that a predilection for textual sources and theoretical manoeuvring has acted to limit postcolonial studies' ability to either intervene in the politics of intellectual theorising about international processes that impact upon the non-West or to understand those issues (such as underdevelopment) that confront the postcolony worldwide.[22] In making my arguments here, I seek to address such criticisms by returning to an earlier tradition of addressing concrete examples grounded within specific postcolonial societies. I also set out to keep company with those theorists who have called for such a renewal of postcolonial studies as might see it reinvigorating its commitments to anticolonial theory and praxis, to the study of culture, and to dialogue with other areas of scholarly enquiry.[23]

When it comes to dialogue with international theory, postcolonial scholars have only recently begun to take up such challenges.[24] Indeed, there are a mere handful of references in the literature that explicitly address the ways in which the international might traffic with the postcolonial. Writing, as he put it "at the edge of international relations", Phillip Darby commented in 1997 that postcolonialism "has had practically no engagement with international relations and very little, for that matter, with globalization…It has developed its own critical modes and specialized language. It has tended to rely on distinctive source materials. Its politics diverge sharply from those of mainstream international relations and globalization theory."[25] But while pointing out postcolonialism's historical distaste for international theory, work such as this also demonstrates a

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[20] Arif Dirlik, *After the Revolution: Waking to Global Capitalism* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 87-89.

[21] Arif Dirlik, "How the Grinch Hijacked Radicalism: Further Thoughts on the Postcolonial," *Postcolonial Studies: Culture, Politics, Economy* 2, no. 2 (1999).

[22] H. D. Harootunian, "Postcoloniality's Unconscious/Area Studies' Desire," *Postcolonial Studies: Culture, Politics, Economy* 2, no. 2 (1999).

[23] Thinking of this kind can be found in: Ania Loomba et al., eds., *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005).

[24] An early example of such work is Phillip Darby and Albert J. Paolini, "Bridging International Relations and Postcolonialism," *Alternatives* 19 (1994).

[25] Darby, "Postcolonialism," 12.

quickening of interest (on the part of some scholars at least) in the ways in which connections between the two might be made. Reflecting the fault lines of postcolonialism itself, these attempts range from the reconciliatory (attempts to insert postcolonialism into disciplines such as international relations and globalization or to delineate the contours of a new postcolonial international relations tradition) to the radical (calls for postcolonialism to be used to challenge the intellectual hegemony of existing theories of the international and to point to such theories' failures to acknowledge their own complicity in those real world crises and issues that effect postcolonial societies). These differences in approach can be summarised as being between those that seek to reform extant disciplinary structures and those that seek to replace them. But whether they are pursued by the varying disciplines' internal malcontents or by those critiquing from the outside, what these studies share is a perception that existing ways of explaining the nature, politics and functioning of the international are (at least in some ways) inadequate. Since so much of my current project is about addressing these theoretical limitations, it is worth examining the sorts of issues these studies have highlighted, and to set out the ways in which I both draw on, and depart from, existing attempts to bring postcolonialism to bear on international theory.

Foremost here are those attempts on the part of established disciplinary formations to claim exclusive rights to theorise and explain international processes. Certain intellectual traditions, chief among them the discipline of international relations (IR), have attempted to carve out a monopoly over the definition of the international. As R.B.J. Walker asserts, international relations acts to "demarcate and discipline the horizons beyond which it is dangerous to pursue any political action".[26] For Walker, this is established through the strict assertion of state sovereignty and by defining the international realm as "outside": that domain which lies beyond the borders of the politically and spatially defined state and which is subsequently taken as the exclusive subject matter of international theory. The discipline of international relations, under such a reading, acts not merely to *describe* the international realm, but actively works to constitute it.

It was perhaps inevitable the disciplinary-boundary riding identified by Walker would come under challenge from the latter-day concupiscence of globalisation studies.[27] At its simplest, this can be expressed as a tension between those who would see the specific problematic of international

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[26] R. B. J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 6.
[27] For an astute and highly critical analysis of those theorists who have attempted to use Walker's work to bolster the intellectual cause of globalization theory see Rosenberg's chapter length examination of *Inside/Outside* in: Justin Rosenberg, *The Follies of Globalisation Theory: Polemical Essays* (London and New York: Verso, 2000), 45-85.

theory as being about the political relations between state actors and those who would downplay the significance of the state and who would replace the very notion of the international with a notion of the global or the transnational. The transformational zeal of the globalization theorists of the late nineties is captured in books such as Thomas Friedman's *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, which in 1999 painted a picture of a largely benign globalism that rewarded societies with strong property rights and democratic structures and rendered increasingly irrelevant power politics, presented as being in conflict with the essential logic and requirements of global capitalism.[28] It is not surprising that, in the West at least, such triumphal accounts of globalization's new power to explain world politics were dealt a blow by the events of 11 September 2001. The resurgence of concerns about sovereignty, state security and geopolitics (articulated both in theory and through military adventure), in the aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks has not squared well with globalization theory's earlier, more expansive, accounts of one-worldism, the millennial democratic promises of global capitalism, or the imminent demise of the nation-state as the defining basis of international affairs. It is, of course, arguable that neither of these theoretical positions have ever had much utility in accounting for matters impacting the global south.

In international theory, then, world politics are increasingly explained in terms drawn from a political renaissance of disciplinary international relations (especially in its Western neorealist and neoliberal guises). This is not to say that globalization has become irrelevant. Indeed, globalization studies have been quick to reinvent themselves as of continuing relevance to the contemporary world, emphasising their strengths in explaining contemporary (some would say – and more on this later - postcolonial) issues, such as the rise of Islam, anti-Americanism and global inequality. It is fair to say though, that, chastened and reshaped by political and intellectual tides of opinion, globalization has conceded some of its earlier claims to omniscience and tended to concentrate more on what is so often referred to as "soft power" (the term itself from disciplinary IR and recasting the debates in those terms): issues of economic instrumentality, trade, culture and flows of information and people.[29] While there may have been problems with globalization studies' attempts to define and theorise the international, in contemporary Western politics and academia today, that terrain has been largely conceded to the discipline of international relations.

But postcolonially informed critiques of international theory highlight far more than just

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[28] Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (London: HarperCollins, 1999).
[29] The concept of soft power is from Joseph Nye: See generally, Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 1st ed. (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

the laying of exclusive claims to the theorisation of international affairs. Given the politics informing postcolonial analysis, it is unsurprising that postcolonial studies would concern themselves with the ideologies, knowledge systems, and intellectual methodologies that underpin mainstream international theory. Such critical readings have revealed four major areas where mainstream international theory is either inadequate in terms of its explanatory capacity or compromised in its politics. In no particular order, these are: a deep-seated ethnocentrism and cultural bias towards Western, and specifically American, goals and purposes; a tendency to project a sense of social-scientific precision by theorising with reference only to a narrow range of materials, and about a strictly defined suite of actors and institutions; a failure to engage with both globally systemic and locally particular legacies of imperialism and colonialism; and a parasitic tendency towards other theoretical traditions that sees them exploited and robbed of their particularity and politics. As Walker puts it, the problematic characteristics of international theory include a "presumed bankruptcy of established intellectual traditions, the untidy proliferation of research strategies, an unseemly dependence on the interests of specific states and cultures, and the hubris of empirical social science."[30]

It will by now be obvious that my current project seeks to provide a way of thinking about the international that, while it may not be an outright replacement for impugned disciplinary formations, does seek to supplement them with alternative views; to work beyond their limitations and address some of the criticisms that have been levelled against them. The approach I adopt may well infuriate many of those working within international relations and globalization studies given its distance from current theoretical and conceptual frameworks. While I touch on, and engage with, work from within IR and globalization studies, I am cautious of becoming too closely entangled in the internal debates of the disciplinary pretenders to ownership of what Jonathan Rosenberg has entitled "the problematic of the international", that assertion of particular defining claims on the part of different schools of international theory.[31] Here I have taken my lead from feminist theorists of the international, who, as Christine Sylvester has argued have "been redoing international relations by doing something that carries IR echoes but is not embedded in IR frameworks."[32] I am also conscious of Sylvester's belief that the impetus for change, especially for

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[30] Walker, *Inside/Outside*, 6.
[31] Rosenberg, *The Follies of Globalisation Theory*, 65-85.
[32] Christine Sylvester, *Feminist International Relations: An Unfinished Journey* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 12.

disciplinary international theory, will most likely come from without, possibly from sources such as travel writing, postcolonial studies or literary studies. Sylvester writes of the need to make the disciplines of the international "taste the everyday dimensions of world(s) in front of us."[33] Many, especially those accustomed to thinking of the international in the conventional terms of (say) state behaviour, may view my choice of subject matter – non-Western sexualities – as either prurient or self-indulgent. But using sexuality as a vantage point from which to view the international has the potential to impart to international theory the everyday flavour that Sylvester identifies as being so important. It also allows us to think through the implications of her call for a new international relations tradition, one able to "take off in new directions", intersecting and drawing from other disciplines such as postcolonial studies, cultural studies, literature, art history and psychoanalytic theory.[34]

This push for international theory to be more open to alternative source materials accords with my own attempt here to read the international from the point of view of the cultural, personal, historical and bodily entanglements which help constitute sexualities. Reading postcolonial Asian sexualities can help in overcoming many of the shortfallings of international theory that have been identified by postcolonialism. To avoid the ethnocentrism of much international theory, for instance, most of my arguments here involve a principled turn *away* from Western examples and experiences to explore perspectives on the international drawn from what might be regarded (at least from the intellectual and academic citadels of America and the West) as lying at the margins of global experience. Many critics have pointed to the very limited range of vantage points from which most surveys of the international surveys are undertaken. There has been a tendency within both studies of international relations and globalisation to assume that the views from the United States (sole military superpower and engine room of the global economy) or, to a lesser extent, from Britain, are the most salient ones.[35] One of the most telling criticisms of both international relations and globalization studies has been regarding the epistemological primacy that both these schools of thought accord to Western categories of thinking. From within IR itself critical voices have been raised, with one mainstream scholar writing of "a discursive regime of exclusion, silence and intolerance that as "International Relations", reduces a complex and turbulent world to a patterned

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[33] Christine Sylvester, "In-between and in Evasion of So Much: Third World Literatures, International Relations and Postcolonial Analysis," *Postcolonial Studies: Culture, Politics, Economy* 2, no. 2 (1999): 260.
[34] Sylvester, *Feminist International Relations*, 12.
[35] Sylvester, "In-between and in Evasion of So Much," 250.

and rigidly ordered framework of understanding, derived from a particular representation of post-Renaissance European historical experience, articulated in orthodox Anglo-American philosophical terms."[36] Elsewhere, scholars have written of the difficulty of theorising the international from non-Western viewpoints, highlighting both the colonially-driven expansion of the Westphalian nation-state outside of Europe as well as the difficulty of thinking beyond Western categories and theorisations when approaching international theory.[37] Key here is the overwhelming influence of those forms of theory emanating from (and arguably constructed to further the interests of) the United States of America. One critic, Steve Smith, has described mainstream disciplinary international relations as

> an American social science, both in terms of the policy agenda that US [United States] IR exports to the world in the name of relevant theory and in terms of the dominant and often implicit epistemological and methodological assumptions contained in that theory. This latter dominance is far more insidious than the former, especially because it is presented in the seemingly neutral language of being 'the social science enterprise'.[38]

Smith draws our attention to the pretensions of scientific accuracy on the part of many theories of the international, as well as to the ways in which they are intertwined with particular politics, ideologies and worldviews. These processes act to influence the choice of materials used in constructing international theory, and the ways in which those materials are used. On this point, Anna Agathangelou and L.H.M. Ling have been sharply critical of disciplinary international theory's relationship with ethnographic studies and materials drawn from the disciplines of area studies and comparative politics. They satirically characterise the ways in which the discipline of international relations consumes such studies, calling into question the hierarchies of knowledge it creates in so doing. At best, they assert, those working in area studies, comparative politics or ethnography are regarded as being "native informant servants", gathering materials from the realms of culture and everyday life (labelled with designations such as "thick descriptions" and "low politics") so that established disciplinary approaches may claim exclusive rights to theorise the world in terms of "high theory" and grand narratives.[39] At worst, the insights they provide, and the materials with

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[36] Jim George, *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), ix.

[37] Navnita Dehera, "Reimagining IR in India: A Tentative Beginning" (paper presented at the Workshop: Why is there No Non-Western International Relations Theory?, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, 11-12 July 2005).

[38] Steve Smith, "The Discipline of International Relations: Still an American Social Science?," *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 2, no. 3 (2000): 399.

[39] Anna M. Agathangelou and L. H. M. Ling, "The House of IR: From Family Power Politics to the *Poisies* of Worldism," *International Studies Review* 6 (2004): 30-31.

which they engage, are dismissed as irrelevant to the task of creating international theory. Following this critique, one of my goals here is to demonstrate that the distinctions between what is occurring at the grassroots of cultures and societies (on the one hand) and the ways in which the international is theorised, consumed and debated (on the other), is at best illusory and at worst restrictive and damaging. If we follow Donald Horowitz's assertion that "a bloody phenomenon cannot be explained by a bloodless theory",[40] then similarly the deep and irrefutable impacts of international politics and transnational flows on individual lives and bodies cannot be explained by theories that only concern themselves with disembodied abstractions and depopulated landscapes.

Sankaran Krishna explores this in his insightful study of the negative consequences that flow from international theory's tendency to describe the world only in terms of the categories it itself constructs and with reference only to those limited materials it regards as pertinent. While recognising that some level of abstraction and model-building is necessary for intellectual debate to proceed, Krishna argues for a more critical and ethical approach to the abstractions utilised in academic work on the international. Conventional approaches, he points out, are wont to excise entire narratives of violence, dispossession, victimhood and resistance that do not fall into the neat categories of inter-state relations or *realpolitik*.[41] Krishna's critical readings of international theory also highlight the fact that those working from within postcolonial studies are definitely not of one mind when it comes to the appropriateness of a postcolonial intervention into international theory. Scholars such as Cynthia Weber and Roland Bleiker have warned those working in the new humanities to keep at arms length from disciplinary international relations if they wish to preserve the distinctive approaches and politics of postcolonial studies. They argue that IR has a long tradition of domesticating dissent by drawing in critical paradigms - Weber points to feminism and postmodernism - and rendering them politically impotent.[42] Those more sceptical have argued that postcolonialism should reject IR completely. The risk of losing any potential for radical change, they argue, is simply too great. Krishna, for instance, points what he regards as the impossibility of overcoming the dominance of Eurocentrism within existing schools of IR, arguing that "postcolonial IR is an oxymoron – a contradiction in terms. To decolonise IR is to deschool oneself from the discipline in its current dominant manifestations: to remember international

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[40] Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 140.
[41] Sankaran Krishna, "Race, Amnesia and the Education of International Relations," *Alternatives* 26, no. 4 (2001).
[42] Weber, "IR: Resurrection or New Frontiers." See also: Roland Bleiker, "Forget IR Theory," *Alternatives* 22, no. 2 (1997), Roland Bleiker, *Popular Dissent, Human Agency and Global Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

relations, one needs to forget IR".[43]

On this point, Sylvester has been more generous in her characterisation of the potential impact of postcolonial studies on international theory as well as postcolonialism's ability both to overcome its own limitations and avoid the dangers of disciplinary incorporation. She argues that it is possible for postcolonialism to overcome its preference for arid intellectual debate and contribute to more practical and politically progressive theories of the international, even if this means engaging with its intellectual and disciplinary others, such as development studies, international relations or global neoliberal economics. She argues that "[i]n the spirit of hybridity, postcolonial studies can read itself into the in-betweens of established and new disciplinary thinking and places hyphenating itself and its knowledges, *on its own many terms*, with those it ostensibly despises, like neoliberalism and developmentalism."[44]

The promises and pitfalls of a postcolonial engagement with international theory shape my own arguments here. I am very conscious that a thesis which works with materials on sexuality – and especially one which draws upon *non-Western* sexualities to flesh out its arguments - has an ethical obligation both to ensure that such materials are not fitted into existing Western parameters of thinking and researching about sexuality and to remain aware that sexualities rarely share a sameness when viewed in cross-cultural and transnational perspective.[45] There is a critical need to remain aware of differences: to tell those stories that have been marginalised by the characterisation of globalization as homogenisation and which have remained on the outside of theorising about the international. While the political sensitivity of postcolonialism to issues such as subjectivity, hybridity or orientalism may appear of obvious relevance in exploring issues of sexuality, approaches such as transnational and globalization studies have more often been called upon to describe the connections between issues such as identity politics and globalizing flows.[46] Yet, while it may be a relative newcomer, postcolonial scholarship has much to offer the student of sexuality studies.

Most obviously, this has to do with overcoming the ethnocentrism that has marked the study of sexuality. For non-Western cultures, the story told in the mainstream of sexuality studies

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[43] Krishna, "Race, Amnesia and the Education of International Relations," 407.

[44] Christine Sylvester, "Development Studies and Postcolonial Studies: Disparate Tales of the 'Third World'," *Third World Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1999): 718. Original emphasis.

[45] I have explored such issues in relation to international human rights law in Simon Obendorf, "Homosexual Rights and the Non-Western World: A Postcolonial Reading of Homosexual Rights in International Human Rights Law," *Third World Legal Studies* (1998-99).

[46] Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, "Postcolonial Studies and Transnational Feminist Practices," Jouvert: A Journal of Postcolonial Studies, http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/v5i1/grewal.htm.

has been about the flow of ideas, sexual identities and sexual practices emanating from the West and spread throughout the world by the devices of transnational capitalism, sexual tourism and Western media forms. Non-Western sexual cultures, inasmuch as they have been topics of such analytical work, have largely been provincialised through their positioning as subject to global capitalism and Western models of sexual identity and behaviour.[47] To give an example, in 1996, *The Economist* magazine editorialised that gay and lesbian culture was "radiating from North America and Europe, homogenising sexual culture as it goes".[48] Since that time, a significant academic literature has emerged, examining the creation of Western-styled sexual subjectivities in spaces formed through the relationship of national and ethnic cultures and the social, cultural and economic forces of transnational globalisation.[49]

Postcolonial studies of sexuality have begun to censure such approaches either for their ethnocentrism or for the fact they downplay the possibility of dissent from dominant Western models of sexual identity or behaviour on the part of members of non-Western societies and cultures.[50] As Yukiko Hanawa has argued, postcolonial approaches can go beyond the simple identification of "indigenous or local sexuality" and point to the fact that "the terms by which the sexual-political economy gets defined are both local and global at the same time."[51] Going still further, the editors of a recent collection on new media forms and sexualities in Asia have drawn upon postcolonialism's normative politics to challenge practitioners of sexuality studies to "contribute to the postcolonial project of 'decentering the West' by challenging narrowly Eurocentric forms of knowledge." [52] They go on to assert that "[t]o take up this approach is not

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[47] I use the term "provincialising" in the manner suggested by Dipesh Chakrabarty when he writes of the subordination of non-Western histories and societies to Western master narratives. Chakrabarty writes that "[f]or generations now, philosophers and thinkers shaping the nature of social science have produced theories embracing the entirety of humanity. As we well know, these statements have been produced in relative, and sometimes absolute, ignorance of the majority of humankind – i.e., those living in non-Western cultures": Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks For "Indian" Pasts?," *Representations* 37 (1992): 2-3.. For a fuller, though arguably less assertive, articulation of this thesis, see: Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[48] "Moreover: It's Normal to Be Queer," *The Economist*, 6 January 1996, 84.

[49] Indicative here are: Barry D. Adam, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and André Krouwel, eds., *The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics: National Imprints of a Worldwide Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), Dennis Altman, *Global Sex* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2001), Dennis Altman, "The New World of 'Gay Asia'," in *Asian and Pacific Inscriptions: Identities, Ethnicities, Nationalities*, ed. Suvendrini Perera (Bundoora: Meridian, 1995).

[50] A good example of such critique is Anjali Arondeker, "Border/Line Sex: Queer Postcolonialities, or How Race Matters Outside the United States," *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 7, no. 2 (2005): 246-49. See also: Michael Connors, "Prefacing Research on the Global Gay," *Melbourne Journal of Politics* 24 (1997), Jon Binnie, *The Globalization of Sexuality* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage, 2004), 69-71.

[51] Yukiko Hanawa, "Introduction," *positions: east asia cultures critique* 4, no. 1 (1996): viii. See also Jigna Desai, "Homo on the Range: Mobile and Global Sexualities," *Social Text* 20, no. 4 (2002).

[52] Chris Berry, Fran Martin, and Audrey Yue, "Introduction: Beep-Click-Link," in *Mobile Cultures: New Media in Queer Asia*, ed. Chris Berry, Fran Martin, and Audrey Yue (Durham and London: Duke University of Press, 2003), 4-5. Original emphasis.

the same as simplistically privileging the local and the particular over the global and the universal while leaving that dichotomy squarely in place."[53]

Comments like these demonstrate postcolonialism's ability to move into intellectual arenas now occupied by theories of globalisation. Indeed, some critics have maintained that postcolonialism is just a descriptor for the latest phase of globalisation: the emergence of a world order structured around the logic of global capitalism and transnational flows, where the encounter with cultural or racial difference is an everyday occurrence.[54] Consequently, it is important to speak not of a grand body of postcolonial theory, but rather of a range of plural and contingent theories *about* the postcolonial condition.[55] The editors of the journal *Postcolonial Studies* have supported such an approach, writing:

> Postcolonialism…must aim to be something more than a chronological marker (after colonialism) and something less than a global or grand theory. It is perhaps best thought of as a toolkit, a mere set of provisional strategies, protocols and concepts, which arise out of a certain recognition of, and approach to, difference. Needless to say, these tools get amended and reshaped according to the disciplinary contexts and the purposes for which they are used.[56]

If we view postcolonialism in this way – as a toolbox of ideas, strategies and approaches – then its utility for my current purposes become clearer. One is thus able to use a postcolonial *method* in terms of a critical reading of the pasts of nations, sexual cultures and cultural relations as well as a postcolonial *politics* to shape an intervention into the politics and theorising of the contemporary international. Writing on contemporary international processes, Phillip Darby has argued that the political dynamic of the contemporary international environment has been so configured as to block attempts at engendering systemic change. Utilising materials on sexuality – intrinsically embedded in everyday lives as well as in national and ethnic cultures – if approached with a postcolonial sensibility may well represent a chance to reveal what Darby terms "politics in the making", a new way of thinking about the patterning of international life itself.[57] Such an approach was hinted at in a 1992 compilation entitled *Nationalisms and Sexualities* in which the editors wrote that both nationalisms and sexualities

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[53] Ibid. Original emphasis.
[54] Dirlik, "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism." See also During, "Postcolonialism and Globalization: Towards a Historicization of Their Inter-Relation," 386-89.
[55] My comments here are influenced by Rosenberg's discussion of globalization theory in: Rosenberg, *The Follies of Globalisation Theory*, 1-15.
[56] Michael Dutton, Leela Gandhi, and Sanjay Seth, "The Toolbox of Postcolonialism," *Postcolonial Studies: Culture, Politics, Economy* 2, no. 2 (1999): 124.
[57] Phillip Darby, "Pursuing the Political: A Postcolonial Rethinking of Relations International," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 1 (2004).

remain volatile sites for condensing and displacing the ecstasies and terrors of political life. For it is the lived crises endured by national and sexed bodies that form our most urgent priorities. These crises are not simply opportunities for the state to activate its strategies of containment and to reimpose its normativities. They also offer dissenting subjects the possibility of producing contestatory practices, narratives of resistance that may reconfigure the horizons of what counts globally today as "the political"[58]

It is here that both the method and politics underpinning the thesis become more apparent. In a recent piece, John and Jean Comaroff have argued that sexuality is becoming a defining aspect of how both groups and individuals react to a world characterised by the dual influences of late capitalism and a globalism that has become increasingly difficult to comprehend or influence. "It is in these privatized terms", they argue "that action is organized, that the experience of inequity and antagonism takes meaningful shape."[59] Echoing this, Mark Chiang has asserted that, "[s]exuality is obviously one important semiotic field in which social relations are negotiated".[60] Recent scholarship has pointed to the imbrication of sexuality studies with the varied debates, theories and approaches to the study of the international within the academe.[61] Queer sexualities even make an appearance as a potential rallying point for systemic international change in Hardt and Negri's apocalyptic manifesto for global social and political revolution under the banner of the multitude.[62] Summarising many of the issues that these varied commentators have grappled with, Mary John has asked,

> How can we render sexuality, or the social frameworks of "sex", intelligible, and make visible the connections between what appear on the surface to be disparate levels of analysis?…[H]ow can we demonstrate that considerations of sex, of men and women's relationships to one another and to themselves are articulated through structures of caste, class, national culture and globalisation?[63]

Questions such as these connect directly with the arguments I advance here: that sexuality can be used to hold up a mirror to the processes by which the personal connects with the

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[58] Andrew Parker et al., "Introduction," in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, ed. Andrew Parker, et al. (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 14.

[59] Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, "Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming," *Public Culture* 12, no. 2 (2000): 305.

[60] Mark Chiang, "Coming Out in the Global System: Postmodern Patriarchies and Transnational Sexualities in *The Wedding Banquet*," in *Q & A: Queer in Asian America*, ed. David L. Eng and Alice Y. Hom, *Asian American History and Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 378.

[61] Povinelli and Chauncey, "Thinking Sexuality Transnationally.", Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, "Global Identities: Theorizing Transnational Studies of Sexuality," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 7, no. 4 (2001), Jasbir Kaur Puar, "Circuits of Queer Mobility: Tourism, Travel and Globalization," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 8, no. 1-2 (2002), Martin F. Manalansan, IV., "In the Shadows of Stonewall: Examining Gay Transnational Politics and the Diasporic Dilemma," in *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, ed. Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997).

[62] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2004), 200.

[63] Mary E. John, "Globalisation, Sexuality and the Visual Field: Issues and Non-Issues for Cultural Critique," in *A Question of Silence? The Sexual Economies of Modern India*, ed. Mary E. John and Janaki Nair (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998), 369.

international. My task is to explore how academic approaches to the international can be encouraged to take seriously materials on the everyday and look more deeply at what is occurring at the grassroots of societies and communities. As Darby has argued, what is needed is the ability to utilize methodologies gained from disciplines such ethnography, anthropology or sociology to excavate the politics and practices of everyday life. This can assist in achieving more sensitive and politically committed readings of contemporary processes of cultural and social change.[64] Veena Das and Arthur Kleinman, in their introduction to the volume *Violence and Subjectivity*, write that the

> traditional appeal of ethnography has been the ability to see the social world in terms of a scale that is commensurable with face-to-face enquiry. Yet these ethnographies reveal that larger social actors such as the state, international organizations, and the global media, as well as transnational flows in finance and people, are all implicated in the actualization of violence that transforms the everyday life of local communities.[65]

To bring such an approach to bear upon international theory is to explore the extent to which the politics of the international can be seen to flow from the realms of the private and the personal. For international studies broadly constituted – and most especially for disciplinary international relations – this is dangerous and unsettling territory. Most obviously it raises issues about bringing alternative source materials into dialogue with the discipline. Here I am very much influenced by the work of Gyanendra Pandey on Partition violence in India where he argues that, while the reality of violence, war and suffering can never be adequately represented in theory or in scholarly accounts, there is an ethical obligation to cast as wide a net as possible in garnering source materials about such events. For Pandey, pamphlets, poems, oral narratives (and their silences) and folk songs can say just as much about international change as can (say) the official accounts of generals, police forces and government enquiries with which scholars and theorists are more comfortable dealing.[66] While I am, to some extent, a prisoner of language, translation and training, I seek to bring the spirit of Pandey's work into the studies that make up the substantive portion of the thesis. Each of the chapters draws upon a range of materials outside of traditional scholarly sources: fictional accounts, poetry, websites, magazines, tourist brochures, advertising ephemera, internet discussion boards and so on. Read togther, these materials give a very different, and often suprising, picture of contemporary world politics. Self-consciously political – and locally or

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[64] Darby, "Pursuing the Political," 31-32.

[65] Veena Das and Arthur Kleinman, "Introduction," in *Violence and Subjectivity*, ed. Veena Das, et al. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 2.

[66] Gyanendra Pandey, "In Defense of the Fragment: Writing About Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today," *Representations* 37 (1992).

personally grounded - narratives have the potential to lead us away from the universalising, rationalist and scientific models that have tended to pervade disciplinary international relations.[67] Feminism was perhaps the first knowledge grouping to attempt an exercise along these lines, explicitly setting out to tell a different story of international relations: one that sought to demonstrate the gendered nature of many of the underlying concepts within the canon. Disciplinary international relations, with its tendency to deal in abstract and depopulated landscapes of power and sovereignty, has arguably ignored many of the realities of a world made up of people, places and the politics of everyday life.[68] Bringing the core feminist assertion that "the personal is political" into engagement with disciplinary international relations has enabled feminist scholars to demonstrate how gendered constructs operate alongside, and often in support of, other axes of dominance, such as class, race and ethnicity and a state-based system of international politics.

While I have deep respect for the work on the international being done under feminist rubrics, it is important to note that many of these studies - by scholars such as LHM Ling, Geeta Chowdhry, Sheila Nair and Christine Sylvester – address the double-barrelled category of "gender and sexuality".[69] In all of these authors' work, the tendency has been to concentrate on the former part of the duo - gender - and downplay issues of sexuality. While I acknowledge that sexuality cannot be studied in isolation from debates on gender, this thesis explicitly sets out to redress the imbalance by concentrating primarily on sexual cultures rather than on gender systems. I am also committed to presenting materials on gender and sexuality in such a way that does not erase or deny their differences or incommensurabilities. There has been a tendency within studies of gender, sexuality and the international to present materials on gender and sexuality in such a way as to attempt to imbue them with a sense of scientific precision or disciplinary legitimacy. In Ling's work, for instance, some of her most interesting and provocative materials on genders and sexualities are presented in tabular, diagrammatic or point form, seemingly devoid of cultural or personal

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[67] While not specifically addressing sexuality, a fine example of such a style of inquiry can be seen in: Warren Magnusson and Karena Shaw, eds., *A Political Space: Reading the Global through Clayoquot Sound* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003). From ethnography, a sense of the possibilities inherent in such analyses can be gleaned from: Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, "Ethnography on an Awkward Scale: Postcolonial Anthropology and the Violence of Abstraction," *Ethnography* 4, no. 2 (2003), Veena Das, "Trauma and Testimony: Implications for Political Community," *Anthropological Theory* 3, no. 3 (2003).

[68] Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1990); Christine Sylvester, *Feminist International Relations: An Unfinished Journey* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 2002).

[69] Geeta Chowdhry and Sheila Nair, eds., *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender and Class* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), L. H. M. Ling, *Postcolonial International Relations: Conquest and Desire between Asia and the West* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), Sylvester, *Feminist International Relations*.

context.[70] I remain resistant to the idea that either gender or sexuality can be merely inserted back into the international as a broad-brush category or subject of analysis.[71] They are useful areas of enquiry, precisely because they resist such categorisation: they are messy, personally experienced and tied up in far broader ideas of how peoples, societies and cultures experience and relate to the international. Postcolonial readings of the international should celebrate and reflect such lack of certainty, rather than seeking to harden categories and bring them into established modes of thinking and doing.

Michael Dutton has explored the processes of incorporation and translation of non-Western knowledges into artefacts deemed suitable objects for Western social "scientific" study. While his comments are directed predominantly to the academic discipline of Asian Studies, they have far broader significance when brought into engagement with the academic social sciences dealing with the international. Dutton points to instances where non-Western knowledges are either dismissed as irrational or else translated into a Western scientific idiom that strips them of their cultural, social or religious significance and specificity. Dutton presents critique of such processes as integral to a process of both postcolonising the domain of Asian area studies but more significantly, to unsettling mainstream disciplinary social science disciplines' claims to universal explanatory power. Dutton's choice of Asian area studies as well as his criticism of disciplinary social science constructs – most obviously those to do with transnationalism and the international – speaks directly to my own analysis here. He writes that,

> [a]s globalization spreads, it cuts its way through different cultural and lived forms and leads to claims not only about shared desires but also about a shared universal logic of desire. It is in critiquing this logic, a logic now transformed into a more general "style of thought" and sometimes spoken in the "objective" language of the contemporary social sciences, that I want to begin to speak of a dialect of potential dissent offered from within a new type of Asian area studies. It is my contention that, if reconfigured into a domain that speaks to, and of, the occluded heterogeneous world of otherness, Asian area studies has the potential to send ripples of doubt through the dominant positivist social science "stories."[72]

The various studies that make up the substantive part of my dissertation explore how sexuality might provide us with new insights into how international issues and spaces are defined,

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[70] An example is at Ling, *Postcolonial International Relations*, 151.

[71] Interesting parallels exist here between IR's incorporation of feminism and its use of culture, especially following Huntington's famous "Clash of Civilizations" thesis: Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

[72] Michael Dutton, "Lead Us Not into Translation: Notes toward a Theoretical Foundation for Asian Studies," *Nepantla: Views from South* 3, no. 3 (2002).

inhabited and negotiated. If we can avoid the epistemic violence associated with the entry of non-Western and non-traditional source materials into the disciplinary fold of international studies, then we can explore the extent to which sexuality operates as a locus of meanings to which individuals and elites turn in order to make sense of, or communicate, issues of international resonance. This will involve working with materials drawn from both the occluded domains of everyday cultural otherness identified by Dutton and from the various negotiations of postcolonial modernity in a globalizing world. And to borrow Dutton's phraseology, if such a project can send some ripples of doubt through dominant discursive models of the international, it will have achieved its purpose.

PART ONE

ENGENDERING THE INTERNATIONAL

THE NATION ON DISPLAY

At first glance the Singapore History Museum is an anomaly: its colonial architecture appears out of place amongst the high-tech buildings of the Singapore Management University's new city campus and in its location at the beginning of Singapore's world-famous retail shopping strip, Orchard Road. Modern Singapore seems to have grown up around - and grown beyond - an institution that began its life at the geographic and intellectual centre of British colonial life. Today, the nearest surviving colonial buildings have been reoccupied and resignified – just down the road, Government House is now the *Istana*, the official residence of Singapore's President, and the nearby Fort Canning, once the symbol of British military might, is now occupied by a theatrical troupe and an up-market country club. Yet the endurance of the Singapore History Museum as a museum can, on closer examination, be read not so much as anomalous but indicative, even constitutive, of Singapore's ongoing search for national identity. The Museum is a rare point of fixity within Singapore's ever changing urban geography. Both due to its physical location and because of its social, political and museological functions, it is positioned between the colonial and the postcolonial, a participant-observer of Singapore's quest for modernity and its often-ambivalent search for a sense of national and international legitimacy.

Thus, the Singapore History Museum provides a window onto the connections between domestic culture and what might broadly be termed the international. The Museum began its life as a profoundly colonial enterprise, a participant in creating and maintaining what Richards has identified as the imperial archive: "a fantasy of knowledge collected and united in the service of state and Empire."[1] The connections between museums and the imperial project have been explored by Nandy who argues that in the colonial museum, "one journeyed through time to view the unfolding phases of history and culture, usually through the eyes of one's society, nation or state."[2] Museums, colonial and post-colonial, have always done much of the work of nationalism;

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[1] Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London and New York: Verso, 1993), 6.
[2] Ashis Nandy, *An Ambiguous Journey to the City: The Village and Other Odd Ruins of the Self in the Indian Imagination* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3.

they encourage individual and collective identification with empire or nation-state, retelling foundation myths, entrenching national values and helping to establish political legitimacy.[3]

The Singapore museum dates from 1887 when, in Queen Victoria's Jubilee year, the British Governor of the Straits Settlements, Sir Frederick Weld, declared open the imposing domed building, purpose-built to house the newly created Raffles Museum and Library.[4] Guidebooks of the time describe it as "well worth a visit, for…the Museum, which is daily being enriched by zoological, mineralogical, ethnological and archaeological collections from the Peninsula and the Archipelago, promises to be, in time, one of the finest exhibitions of its kind in Asia."[5] The building and collections survived the World War II Japanese occupation of Singapore and the trauma of Singapore's expulsion from the Malaysian federation in 1965. Upon Singapore's independence, the institution, still housed in the original, though now much-expanded colonial building, was renamed the National Museum "to reflect the Museum's pivotal role in nation building."[6] In 1993, the Museum was brought under the auspices of the Singaporean government's National Heritage Board and again renamed, this time as the Singapore History Museum. The institution continues to see itself as charged with a "mission to enhance the nation's identity by presenting and interpreting Singapore's history and material culture."[7]

Thus, the colonial history, both of the Singaporean nation and the Singapore museum, is of central importance in understanding the links between external processes and the ways in which these impact, and are consumed, within contemporary Singapore. Wee asserts that "Singapore is probably distinct among post-colonial societies in its *valorisation* of the *imperial past*, a past of progress it might be said."[8] Ang and Stratton argue that this celebration of the imperial past combined with Singapore's need to distinguish itself *from* that past is "structurally constitutive of Singapore as a modern national cultural entity."[9] They go on to suggest that

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[3] Chris Healy, "Histories and Collecting: Museums, Objects and Memories," in *Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia*, ed. Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), 38.

[4] G. M. Reith, *Handbook to Singapore with Map*, ed. William Makepeace, 2nd ed. (Singapore: Fraser and Neave Ltd, 1907), 63.

[5] Ibid., 41.

[6] Singapore History Museum, "About the Museum," http://www.nhb.gov.sg/SHM/About_Us. See also: Gretchen Liu, *In Granite and Chunam: The National Monuments of Singapore* (Singapore: Landmark Books and The Preservation of Monuments Board, 1996).

[7] Singapore History Museum, "Our Collections," http://www.nhb.gov.sg/SHM/Collection/collection.htm.

[8] C. J. W.-L. Wee, "Contending with Primordialism: The 'Modern' Construction of Postcolonial Singapore," in *Asian and Pacific Inscriptions: Identities, Ethnicities, Nationalities*, ed. Suvendrini Perera (Bundoora: Meridian, 1995), 143. Original emphasis.

[9] Ien Ang and Jon Stratton, "Straddling East and West: Singapore's Paradoxical Search for National Identity," in *Asian and Pacific Inscriptions: Identities, Ethnicities, Nationalities*, ed. Suvendrini Perera (Bundoora: Meridian, 1995), 179.

> Many aspects of Singapore's contemporary social and political reality have been shaped precisely by the ambivalent cultural status of the Singaporean nation-state within the modern world-system of nation-states – an ambivalence emanating from its positioning as a country which, in a fundamental way, is both non-Western and always-already Westernised, neither truly Western nor authentically 'Asian'.[10]

Navigating this cultural ambivalence and contributing to the search for national identity and legitimacy within an international world-system is thus a key challenge for the Singapore History Museum. A national museum is never a mere repository of a nation's history; it also reflects and packages profoundly contemporary understandings of national identity and culture.[11] Patrick Boylan has suggested that, in formerly colonised states, post-independence leaders have regarded a national defence force, a national broadcasting service, a national museum and a national university as the four most significant institutions to communicate, maintain and reinforce conceptions of national unity and national character.[12] Ivan Karp echoes this, arguing that museums are "crucibles for forging citizens…because they are spaces for the play of identities."[13] Applying these lessons to Singapore, Adams has asserted that "the urban museum can be construed as an instrument for constructing urban, provincial, national, regional and even global identities…museums are not only markers of a metropolitan landscape, they are also sites for disseminating authoritative scripts for viewing the world."[14]

These connections between postcolonial national identity and the national museum call out for deeper scrutiny. In 1999, the National Heritage Board called for members of the public to suggest products and artefacts representative of Singapore at the turn of the millennium. Of the 229 suggestions received, 50 items were chosen by the curators of the Singapore History Museum to be first exhibited at the Museum and then sealed into a "Millennium Time Capsule" to be buried in the grounds of the Museum for the first 50 years of the 21st century.[15] Writing on time capsules, Oravec has suggested that they

> celebrate the present as well as the future; they create a kind of "instant history" as their creation and internment is celebrated. This may serve to explain the popularity of time capsules in a society such

[10] Ibid., 179-80.

[11] See generally James Michael Gore, "Representations of History and Nation in Museums in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand: The National Museum of Australia and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa" (PhD Thesis, The University of Melbourne, 2002).

[12] Patrick Boylan, "Museums and Cultural Identity," *Museums Journal* 90, no. 10 (1990): 30.

[13] Ivan Karp, "On Civil Society and Social Identity," in *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*, ed. Ivan Karp, Christine Mullen Kreamer, and Steven D. Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 25.

[14] Kathleen M. Adams, "Museum/City/Nation: Negotiating Identities in Urban Museums in Indonesia and Singapore," in *Theorizing the Southeast Asian City as Text: Urban Landscapes, Cultural Documents, and Interpretative Experiences*, ed. Robbie B.H. Goh and Brenda S.A. Yeoh (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd., 2003), 153-54.

[15] "Encapsulating the Present," *Straits Times*, 25 November 1999.

as the United States that recognizes relatively few cultural landmarks in comparison with Europe and the Middle East. Time capsules are a "technological fix" that can serve to engineer a form of historical legacy.[16]

Oravec's comments regarding the United States resonate with the comparatively brief history of independent Singapore and the ongoing ambivalence regarding the constitution of Singaporean national identity. The Singapore Millennium Time Capsule project, which explicitly references officially sanctioned visions of Singaporean nationalism and identity, within the controlled space of the Singapore History Museum is both a participant in, and a reflection of, the debates over national identity. An example of this can be seen in the comments of the Singapore Minister for Information and the Arts, Lee Yock Suan, who, when launching the Time Capsule project, explicitly drew linkages between the constructions of national history and identity encompassed by the project and external threats to the Singaporean nation.

> As a small country, we will always be concerned with our water supply and our national security. The bottom line is that no one owes us a living. Building a sense and appreciation of our own history and origins is important as one line of defence. We need to find interesting ways of getting Singaporeans to be aware of our past. Knowing our history is part and parcel of being a Singaporean. Our history is our national memory through which we make sense of our present.[17]

Such references to national defence and matters such as water supply and national economic viability seem incongruous amidst the pomp of launching a major national cultural project of self-definition and celebration such as the Time Capsule. But I am convinced that a reading of the Time Capsule project offers significant insights to the ways in which Singapore national identity continues to be constructed with reference to outside events and tropes of national vulnerability. More significantly, however, these understandings of territorial insecurity, ambiguous cultural and national self-identification and the tenebrous relationship between colonial histories and an ongoing quest for modernity, are fundamentally reflected in the constitution of *gendered* subjectivities in postcolonial Singapore. Beyond the policies and pronouncements of a national government, I will be suggesting that the international politics of a postcolonial polity such as Singapore can, in some key respects, be read off the ways in which gendered identities are

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[16] Jo Ann Oravec, "Time Capsules: A Cultural History," *Journal of Popular Culture* 37, no. 4 (2004): 736.
[17] Lee Yock Suan, "Speech by Mr Lee Yock Suan, Minister for Information and the Arts and Minister for the Environment, at the Launch Of "Singapore: A Pictorial History 1819-2000" And the Millennium Time Capsule at City Hall Chambers," Singapore Government Press Release, Media Division, Ministry of Information and The Arts, Government of Singapore, http://stars.nhb.gov.sg/data//pdfdoc/1999111207.htm.

constituted, disciplined and regulated – and the ways in which individuals themselves utilize tropes of gender to resist and reform such authoritative, state-sanctioned identities.

For an initial example of such a connection between gendered subjectivities and the international politics of Singapore one need look no further than the contents of the Millennium Time Capsule. Among the exhibits (many of which were ephemera: train and bus tickets, parking coupons, bank cards and lottery tickets) two stood out. Side by side in the exhibition catalogue were the Singapore Airlines s*arong kebaya* female flight attendant's uniform and the Singapore Armed Forces camouflage military uniform (See Figure One).[18] These uniforms immediately invoke two profoundly gendered identities: the Singapore Girl, that iconic stewardess of the government-owned Singapore Airlines, and the national serviceman/full-time national serviceman, the citizen-soldier supposedly the result of two to two and a half years of compulsory fulltime military service and ongoing part time service in the military reserves by all Singapore males. In the pages that follow, I shall have more to say about each of these gendered identities and their imbrication with conceptions of Singapore's international position. What is important to note at this stage is that the subjectivities invoked by the inclusion of these two uniforms in the Millennium Time Capsule are not merely of domestic significance to a Singapore audience. The tag-line description of each of these uniforms in the exhibition catalogue clearly demonstrates the broader international connotations of each of these gendered identities, with the military uniform presented as "[c]lothing our faithful defenders" and the female flight attendant's uniform described as "[t]he familiar look of our ambassadors in the sky".[19] The meanings attached to these idealised identities are thus fundamentally international, referencing broader themes such as Singaporean national defence, external representations of the nation and the perceived territorial vulnerability of a tiny state. Significantly, too, these meanings are instantly recognisable locally, in Singapore, as international in nature. The ambassadorial function of the Singapore Girl, for instance, was recognised when the brand identity was awarded the 2003 "Outstanding Contribution to Tourism" prize in Singapore's 18th annual Tourism Awards. The Singapore Girl was praised

> for placing Singapore on the world map, and [for] her consistent contribution towards making
> Singapore a world-renowned destination over the past 30 years. Singapore's most recognisable

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[18] Singapore History Museum, *Singapore at the Turn of the Millennium Catalogue* (Singapore: Singapore History Museum, National Heritage Board, Government of Singapore, 1999), 3-4.
[19] Ibid.

ambassador, the 'Singapore Girl' has helped to enhance the image of Singapore as a people, and tourist destination with her warmth, hospitality and grace.[20]

It is these connections between domestic gendered subjectivities and the international that I seek to tease out. I have shaped my discussion of this material around the two instances of Singaporean gendered identity referenced in the Millennium Time Capsule – the national serviceman and the Singapore Girl. Each of these is a productive exemplar of the ways in which individuals, and their genders, become enmeshed both with national policies and aspirations and with international processes. Significantly too they illustrate the ways in which these national and international phenomena are understood, consumed and processed within contemporary Singapore society. I have also taken this gendered, arguably heteropatriarchal, division between the two nationalist personae as a guide in partitioning my analyses between the two chapters that make up this section. While this is essentially a matter of organisational convenience, it does require some explanation. Like the paired images in the Time Capsule catalogue, these two chapters form a diptych. Following on from these introductory comments, many of the materials I introduce in the first chapter form a bridge to the counterpart discussion of Singaporean femininity I compass in the second. Similarly, much of what I have to say in that later chapter resonates and takes on added meaning when read in conjunction with my earlier work. Like the societal division of the sexes itself, a focus on one aspect, masculinity or femininity, is incomplete without an understanding of how it is formed in imbrication and dialogue with its other.

The first chapter, then, situates such a broader discussion by focussing on Singapore's National Day parade, a patriotic ceremony in which idealised gendered subjectivities, including both the Singapore Girl, and, more obviously, the national serviceman, are deployed, consumed and celebrated. My discussion of the parades seeks to shed light on the ways in which concepts of masculinity and femininity link out to broader international concerns of the Singapore state – and how these gendered international meanings also circulate within everyday Singaporean life. It also introduces a theme that runs through the sections that follow: the importance of addressing issues of everyday life in the theorising and study of the contemporary international. The second part of the chapter more closely examines the phenomenon of national service in Singapore, and the figure of the national serviceman, as an illustration of the ways in which masculinities are profoundly interlinked with both the international concerns of the Singapore state and with the cultural and

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[20] Singapore Tourism Board, "Singapore's 18th Tourism Awards Promote Unique Experiential Factors," Singapore Tourism Board, http://app.stb.com.sg/asp/new/new03a.asp?id=943.

ethnic politics that arise from Singapore's position as postcolonial society, a city of the Chinese diaspora and a multiethnic community within a predominantly Muslim Malay region.

The second of these paired chapters examines conceptions of appropriate feminine behaviour in Singapore, using the widely recognised figure of the Singapore Girl to inform a discussion of the ways in which cultural, national and global forces act upon the bodies of Singapore women, as well as the ways that femininity is packaged, constructed and exploited in Singapore's engagement with its outside. Here I examine the differences – and crucially, the similarities - between globally circulating knowledges that surround Singaporean women, epitomised by such figures as the Singapore Girl, and the political, social and domestic concerns of Singaporean women "back home". This chapter seeks to demonstrate how the connection between international processes and individual gendered identity has, for a large number of Singapore women, acted to circumscribe political activity and reinforce an essentialist understanding of gendered behaviour which garners its authority not just from the hegemonic reach of state power, but also from culturally and ethnically specific, as well as intrinsically transnational, influences upon the nature of gendered subjectivities. As I will be arguing throughout both chapters, the centrality of both the Singapore Girl and the national serviceman to widely understood and visible conceptions of Singapore nationalism, economic prestige and international credibility, as well as their overt pairing as representative symbols in the Millennium Capsule exhibition, makes them a productive starting point from which to explore the ways in which gender should be regarded as of central interest to scholars of the contemporary international.

Gender analyses have, of course, been common within the field of international relations for some time. The pioneering work of scholars such as Cynthia Enloe and Christine Sylvester has highlighted the ways in which disciplinary conceptual abstractions (such as sovereignty, the Westphalian state, and a world-system of nation-states) tend to ignore, or even erase, many of the realities of a world made up of human beings and cultural locations.[21] A clear example of the kinds of thinking that can be derived from taking seriously in studies of the international the feminist assertion that the personal is political can be seen in a recent interview between Carol Cohn and Cynthia Enloe, where the latter stated that "I, of course, see the "international" as embedded in the national and in the local. And…I also see – or better have been taught by other feminists to see –

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[21] Christine Sylvester, *Feminist International Relations: An Unfinished Journey* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

the "political" in many spaces that others imagine are purely economic, or cultural, or private."[22] It is this very personally and culturally embedded approach to the politics of the international that I pursue here.

Approaching gender in this way also contributes to the thesis' broader project of bringing approaches from the realm of sexuality studies to bear on the contemporary politics of the international. It is, perhaps, self-evident that gender and sexuality are intrinsically bound to one another. Jeffrey Weeks has argued that "the elaboration of sexual difference has been central to the subordination of women, with sexuality not only reflecting but being constitutive in the construction and maintenance of the power relationship between men and women. Sexuality is fundamentally gendered."[23] A focus on genders and sexualities also serves the purpose of highlighting the international, colonial and disparate power relations acting upon individual bodies. As Homi Bhabha puts it, "the body is always simultaneously inscribed in both the economy of pleasure and desire, and the economy of discourse, domination and power."[24] The connections between power, gender and sexuality have been explored in the extensive literature on nationalism and gender/sexuality. Tamar Mayer, in the introduction to the edited collection *Gender Ironies of Nationalism* argues that:

> The nation is composed of sexed subjects whose "performativity" constructs not only their own gender identity but the identity of the whole nation as well. Through repetition of accepted norms and behaviors – control over reproduction, militarism and heroism, and heterosexuality – members help to construct the privileged nation; equally, the repetitive performance of these acts in the name of the nation helps to construct gender and sexuality.[25]

Here, Mayer references Judith Butler's important, if sometimes overly opaque, work on the performative nature of gender.[26] Butler, following Simone de Beauvoir's famous assertion that "one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one"[27] believes that gender, far from referencing the innate essence of a sexed body, emerges as a result of the repetition of words, acts, gestures and

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[22] Carol Cohn and Cynthia Enloe, "A Conversation with Cynthia Enloe: Feminists Look at Masculinity and the Men Who Wage War," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 4 (2003): 1188.

[23] Jeffrey Weeks, *Making Sexual History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 132.

[24] Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question: Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," in *Literature, Politics and Theory*, ed. Francis Barker, et al. (London and New York: Methuen, 1986), 150.

[25] Tamar Mayer, "Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Setting the Stage," in *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation*, ed. Tamar Mayer (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 5.

[26] See, for example, Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 134-41, Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988).

[27] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Bantam, 1952), 249. See also Monique Wittig, "One Is Not Born a Woman," in *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*, ed. Monique Wittig (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

desires which "produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause."[28] She goes on to argue that such "acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means."[29] Significant work has been undertaken on the ways in which this performance of gender within the postcolonial nation-state is scripted with reference to overriding imperatives of state survival and national biological and cultural reproduction.[30] The simultaneously authoritative and creative nature of these gender scripts was recognised by Butler herself when she wrote that

> as a strategy of survival within compulsory systems, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences. Discrete genders are part of what "humanizes" individuals within contemporary culture; indeed we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right. Because there is neither an "essence" that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires, and because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all.[31]

Yet while the implications for citizens and subjects of these authoritative, and often exclusionary, gender codes have been comprehensively explored, less attention has been paid to the ways in which gender is constituted as a category which is shaped by both personal and national interactions with the international. Nations, and nationalisms, among the chief arbiters of the distinction between self and other, thus become of central significance to a study of the internationalised dimensions of gendered subjectivities. Nations are neither constructed, nor maintained, in a gender-neutral fashion.[32] As Anne McClintock aptly states: "All nationalisms are gendered, all are invented and all are dangerous…dangerous in the sense that they represent relations to political power and to the technologies of violence."[33] Connell has argued that gender acts to link "other fields of social practice to the nodal practices of engendering, childbirth and parenting"[34] – concerns that have long occupied political elites in postcolonial societies. It is these

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[28] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 136. Original emphasis.
[29] Ibid. Original emphasis.
[30] Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997), 21-25, Mayer, "Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Setting the Stage."
[31] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 139-40.
[32] Georgina Waylen, *Gender in Third World Politics* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1996), 14-17, Andrew Parker et al., "Introduction," in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, ed. Andrew Parker, et al. (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 5-9, Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London and New Delhi: Zed Books and Kali for Women), 1-24.
[33] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 352.
[34] R. W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 140.

processes that I explore in these paired chapters, with reference to materials from Singapore. Much research has been carried out on the ways in which gender and sex are key sites where the postcolonial state has attempted, through its role in shaping the very categories of gender and sexuality, to both discipline bodies and to control biological and cultural reproduction.[35] I argue here that this process, which Ong and Peletz have termed "body politics"[36], is never merely domestic; the state's involvement in the scripting of gendered identities is always conducted with reference to broader international considerations.

Yet I am also cautious of over-privileging the role of the state – ever a temptation for scholars of contemporary Singapore – in this process. The ways in which gender is scripted are rarely open to direct control or manipulation, either by subjects themselves or by political abstractions such as nationalism or the state. Maila Stivens has cautioned scholars working on gender in Southeast Asian studies against viewing the state as a "monolithic patriarchal entity" and to recognise that the relationship between gender and the state is never one of direct gender subordination, but rather a contested site of negotiation and dialogue.[37] Accordingly, I discuss here the ways in which sexual and gendered identities are constructed in social matrices impacted by both international flows but also domestic (and of course internationally impacted) considerations such as class, nationalism, ethnicity and culture. I also hope to demonstrate that despite the well-documented penetration of patriarchal structures of state control into aspects of Singaporean everyday life that significant possibilities do exist for dissenting voices, positions and subjectivities to emerge.[38] To return to Butler's concept of performative gender, I argue here that in performing and resisting dominant gender scripts, Singaporean men and women both *enact* and *embody* Singapore – and that the gendered identities that find expression within postcolonial Singapore are an important site whereby Singapore's international politics become apparent in the conduct and nature of Singaporean everyday life.

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[35] M. Jacqui Alexander, "Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas Tourist Economy," in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, ed. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Thinking Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 65, Geraldine Heng and Janadas Devan, "State Fatherhood: The Politics of Nationalism, Sexuality and Race in Singapore," in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, ed. Andrew Parker, et al. (New York and London: Routledge, 1992).

[36] Aihwa Ong and Michael G. Peletz, "Introduction," in *Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Body Politics in Southeast Asia*, ed. Aihwa Ong and Michael G. Peletz (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 5-7.

[37] Maila Stivens, "Why Gender Matters in Southeast Asian Politics," in *Why Gender Matters in Southeast Asian Politics*, ed. Maila Stivens, Monash Papers on Southeast Asia (Clayton: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1991), 18.

[38] For the classic – and much cited - study of Singaporean state patriarchy see Heng and Devan, "State Fatherhood."

In the sections that follow, I present a number of illustrative examples to illuminate the ways in which Singaporean gendered subjectivities reflect broader international themes and flows. While many of my examples may appear, at first glance, to be (in the words of Singapore's newly launched tourism brand strategy) "Uniquely Singapore",[39] I am not persuaded by those scholars who believe that Singapore's particularity implies that analyses of Singaporean materials are not applicable in other contexts.[40] My focus in these two chapters remains squarely on Singapore, yet the arguments raised here are equally applicable to the postcolonial condition in a host of other developing or newly industrialised societies, and indeed, to the First World itself. The internationalised dimensions of gender performativity, whether they be reflected in specifically Singaporean figures like the Singapore Girl or the national serviceman, or referenced in more obviously transnational figures such as the mother, the urban career woman, or the gay man or lesbian, makes gender performativity a vital site for investigation by students of the international.

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[39] Singapore Tourism Board, "Brand Overview: Destination Singapore," Singapore Tourism Board, http://app.stb.com.sg/asp/des/des05.asp.

[40] For an example of such thinking see: Clark D. Neher, *Southeast Asia in the New International Era*, 4th ed. (Boulder and Cumnor Hill: Westview Press, 2002), 174. Neher argues that 'Singapore's singularity does not allow for meaningful comparison with other countries. Indeed Singapore is an exception in Southeast Asia in terms of culture, ethnicity, geography, state capacity and level of economic development.' See also Nirmala PuruShotam's critical discussion of Singaporean particularity: Nirmala PuruShotam, "'Woman' as Boundary: Raising the Communitarian against Critical Imaginings," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 3, no. 3 (2002): 337.

**FIGURE ONE: DETAIL FROM "SINGAPORE AT THE TURN OF THE MILLENNIUM"
EXHIBITION CATALOGUE, PAGES 3-4**

Source: Singapore History Museum. 1999. *Singapore at the Turn of the Millennium Catalogue.* Singapore: Singapore History Museum, National Heritage Board, Government of Singapore.

The SIA Sarong Kebaya
The familiar look of our ambassadors in the sky...

04

Item courtesy of Singapore Airlines

NS Uniform
Clothing our faithful defenders...

03

A UNIFORM STATE?

I had a small part in a
Big show of a great little nation
My uniformed mates and I were
To march out, swing left,
Turn twice, and get off the grounds
In twenty seconds flat.
Meanwhile the music boomed,
The lasers splashed,
And the darkened crowds hit
A new high of pre-planned,
Programmed excitement.
Later at home, my mother replayed
The video tape five times
But couldn't tell her tiny toy-
Soldier son from any of the rest.
"That one is me," I said,
Pointing at the screen.
I couldn't be sure.
Still, we laughed and clapped
Our hands like children,
Knowing that it was not
Supposed to matter.[1]

- Gilbert Koh

Gilbert Koh's poem, "National Day Parade" depicts the thoughts of a young Singaporean national serviceman regarding his participation, as part of a military unit, in one of Singapore's spectacular independence day parades. These parades are held annually, either at the historically significant *Padang* (field) near Singapore's colonial City Hall and Supreme Court buildings or at the National Stadium.[2] The presentation of the parades has been identified as a strategy by political elites in Singapore to both craft appropriate national identities and to strengthen popular support

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[1] Gilbert Koh, "National Day Parade," in *From Boys to Men: A Literary Anthology of National Service in Singapore*, ed. Koh Buck Song and Umej Bhatia (Singapore: Landmark Books, 2002), 96.

[2] Stephen Tan argues that these venues are "'representational space'; the Padang which is located in the colonial administrative core with its neoclassical architecture, and the National Stadium which represented the strides Singapore has made since its Independence': Stephen Yunn Gwang Tan, *Engineering a Nation: Fascist Vision after WWII* (School of Communication, Simon Fraser University, accessed 7 July 2004); available from http://www.sfu.ca/~stana/files/papers/fascist.pdf. See also: Lily Kong and Brenda S.A. Yeoh, "The Construction of National Identity through the Production of Ritual and Spectacle: An Analysis of National Day Parades in Singapore," *Political Geography* 16, no. 3 (1997): 219-24. The historical significance of National Day parades held on the *Padang* is depicted on a former Singapore one dollar bank note: Monetary Authority of Singapore, *Bird Series - $1* (Monetary Authority of Singapore, 2003, accessed 24 June 2004); available from http://www.mas.gov.sg/masmcm/bin/pt1Singapore_Circulation_Notes_Bird_Series__11_P.htm.

for government ideologies and the political status quo.[3] Indeed, the Parade organisers are extremely open about this aspect of the Parade's *raison d'être.* On the official National Day parade website for 2004,[4] one feature essayist writes that "there is a need for the rituals of patriotism, so as to galvanise an entire nation into remembering our past, to celebrate the present and to remind us that the future is yet to be." Commenting on the tendency for the Parade to highlight or refer to key moments in Singapore's history, she goes on to assert that "[b]y writing history in this manner, the idea of nationality is made definitive and official."[5] While some commentators have, in recent years, identified a shift in the visible role played by the military in these parades (from one of demonstrating military might through the parading of armoured vehicles and weaponry to one of emphasising the combat skills and professional discipline of military personnel through demonstrations such as skydiving, parachuting and choreographed bayonet drills[6]) the Parade, both in its presentation and its organisation, remains a thoroughly military affair.[7]

> [A]ll national day parades have been a military enterprise, planned annually by colonels and lieutenant-colonels, led by sergeant majors, marched, staged and performed by soldiers. Even the glossy souvenir programme is produced by the Ministry of Defence. The sequence of each National Day parade follows the logic of a military protocol: a school choir sings; hundreds of provost guards march; ministers arrive; spectators stand as the prime minister appears; guards salute as the president arrives with a fanfare; the national anthem is played; the president inspects the guards; the show begins with gun salutes, military stunts, fly-past, drive-past, and march-past. In this schema, the highlights are always some military display, while civilians and students trail behind in the last half-hour of floats, show and dance.[8]

Kong and Yeoh have explored the ways in which the national identities that are consumed in, and constructed through, the staging of this elaborate national ritual are marked by "an acute awareness of the need to survive in a neighbourhood of regional hostility".[9] This gives rise, they argue, to the "military flavour of [the] parades, asserting the capabilities of a small island in

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[3] Lily Kong and Phua Siew Chye, "Ideology, Social Commentary and Resistance in Popular Music: A Case Study of Singapore," *Journal of Popular Culture* 30, no. 1 (1996): 221.

[4] NDP 04 EXCO, *National Day Parade 2004* (NDP 04 EXCO, 2004, accessed 8 July 2004); available from http://www.ndp.org.sg/.

[5] Claire Tan, *To Share a History Is to Share an Identity* (NDP 04 EXCO, 2004, accessed 8 July 2004); available from http://www.ndp.org.sg/oursingapore/articles/sharehistory.html. Ignoring a history of Aboriginal dispossession, Tan also draws parallels between the construction of nationalism in Singapore and in Australia, arguing incorrectly that Australia's national holiday, Australia Day, commemorates the birth of 'one of those rare states not borne [*sic*] out of conflict and bloodshed.'

[6] Kong and Yeoh, "The Construction of National Identity," 224-225, Irvin Fang Jau Lim, "Imag(in)ing Citizenship: Live-Telecasting a Nation on Parade '93," in *Reading Culture: Textual Practices in Singapore*, ed. Phyllis G. L. Chew and Anneliese Kramer-Dahl (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1999), 126.

[7] Singapore International Foundation, *National Day Parade as Logistics Exercises* (Singapore International Foundation, Oct-Dec 2002, accessed 14 July 2004); available from http://www.sgezine.com.sg/centrepiece/1002ns1.html.

[8] Leong Wai Teng, *Consuming the Nation: National Day Parades in Singapore* (Singapore: Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore, 1999), 5-6.

[9] Kong and Yeoh, "The Construction of National Identity," 236.

defence."[10] This aspect of the parade has perhaps been captured best by Devasahayam, who argues that the National Day parade, held annually on 9 August (the date of Singapore's expulsion from the Malaysian Federation in 1965) is a symbolic dialogue with Malaysia in which Singapore, in an overt display of sabre-rattling, demonstrates its military might both to Malaysia and to other regional powers.[11]

Koh's poem – with its references to the author and his "uniformed mates" marching in the "big show of a great little nation" – captures much of the tenor of these analyses but it is also a deeply personal response to the enforced homogeneity of military and national identities as well as a comment on the ways nationalist propaganda serves the ends of social control in, and for, the modern state. This personal response is informed not only by the author's participation in the conceptions of identity reinforced and celebrated by the parade, but also by a critical personal reflection on those identity formations and the methods used to compel adherence to them. References to "toy soldiers", to the submersion of the self in both the military unit and the nation, and to the crowd reaching new heights of "pre-planned, | programmed excitement" suggest a mode of reading Singapore's preoccupations with domestic social control and international vulnerability that begins not with the state, but starts with, and works out from, the individual.

The fact that these insights can be derived through critical reading of a piece of contemporary Singapore poetry demonstrates the nexus between literature and personal responses to the international. Phillip Darby has argued that "many facets of the relations between societies can be related to lived experience"[12] and further that "literature's concentration on the personal can be a corrective to international relations' preoccupation with aggregates, its mechanistic presumptions about international processes and its positivist approach to outcomes."[13] Allied to these opportunities are the benefits that might flow from the application, to real events and to everyday life, of modes of enquiry drawn from textual analysis.[14] Gender analysis comes immediately to the fore, here. Scholars working in postcolonial literary studies have long drawn on

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Theresa Wilson Devasahayam, "Happy Birthday Singapore: An Analysis Of "Identities" In the National Day Parade" (MA Thesis, Ohio University, 1990), 50. Cited in Leong Wai Teng, *Consuming the Nation*, 7. Kong and Yeoh further argue that the military aspects of the parades are 'an occasion to show Singaporeans and the world that although the island was small and the population inconsiderable it had every intention to defend itself against external threats.': Kong and Yeoh, "The Construction of National Identity," 224.

[12] Phillip Darby, *The Fiction of Imperialism: Reading between International Relations and Postcolonialism* (London and Washington: Cassell, 1998), 41.

[13] Ibid., 42.

[14] An interesting textual analysis of the television presentation of the National Day Parade of 1993 can be found in: Lim, "Imag(in)ing Citizenship."

literary materials to illustrate the ways in which external and internal exercises of power and hegemony have acted to shape gendered subjectivities within postcolonial polities. Central has been the work by Partha Chatterjee on postcolonial nationalism, in which he draws upon Indian literature, drama and autobiography to illustrate the ways in which the constructions of nationhood and nationalisms have been complicit in the subordination of women and the allocation of specific nationalistic tasks to binomially defined gender roles. Under such a model, men occupy the public domain, owning, administering, and defending the nation, while women, emplaced in the private space of the home, are symbolically representative of the nation, repositories of its culture, language and customs, and guardians of its future viability through the production of babies and the transmission of cultural knowledge from mother to child.[15]

As should by now be apparent, this chapter, while reliant on the work of scholars such as Chatterjee, is somewhat different from the types of readings they present. Obviously those gendered identities included in the vision of Singapore presented by the National Day parade are imbued with a certain nationalistic flavour and political utility. Yet the parade's significance is not merely due to its position as a state scripted ritual. As a reading of Koh's poem suggests, the parade references idealised, state-endorsed visions of everyday life and gendered subjectivity. Yet it is also a space in which Singaporeans participate in and consume such identities and messages. And it is such a dialogue between the elite and the everyday – marked by processes of resistance, cooption and volunteerism - that acts to shape the nature and contours of Singaporean everyday life. What I am interested in exploring here is how, or to what extent, everyday life might stand as a productive site of analysis for those interested in unpacking, or gaining new perspectives, on the penetration of international issues into Singaporean everyday life; on the ways in which the international concerns of the Singapore state are reflected, consumed and played out both in domestic policies and in everyday settings; and the ways in which the international can be theorised not merely from the familiar analytical standpoints of state and nation but in ways that build out from individuals, subjectivities and the processes of everyday life. Given the impact that feminist analyses have had on encouraging more progressive studies of the international, it seems clear that gender categories are a productive entry point to such an exploration – allowing one to read the ways in which

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[15] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), Chapter 6. See also: Philip Holden, "Coda," in *Imperial Desire: Dissident Sexualities and Colonial Literature*, ed. Phillip Holden and Richard J. Ruppel (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 311-317.

national policies, cultural settings and global flows give rise to gendered subjectivities that act to write certain internationalised meanings onto the bodies of postcolonial subjects.

Such readings are almost inevitably coloured by Foucault's analysis of the construction of docile bodies by the state in *Discipline and Punish*.[16] Foucault starts with the constructed nature of both the soldier's obedience to orders and his physical bearing to lead into an examination of the ways in which the state has come to regard citizens' bodies as targets of power and objects of discipline and coercion. Key to this construction of bodily subjectivity (the treatment of individual and group identities as "something that can be made; out of a formless clay"[17]) is the thorough militarization of society through institutions such as schools, the military, prisons and other agencies of state control.[18] Once rendered docile and compliant the citizen's body can then be made functional, "subjected, used, transformed and improved."[19] While Foucault's illustrative examples are drawn from military, educational, medical and industrial institutions, he cursorily acknowledges gendered and racial subjectivities, remarking in a footnote that "other examples might have been taken from colonization, slavery, and child rearing."[20] Here it is possible to conceive of a dialogue linking colonial discourse analysis, postcolonial studies and studies of gender and sexuality. Such a dialogue might shed significant light on the ways international flows of change and exchange impact on subjects in ways that are both individual and mediated through the structure of the nation-state.

Discipline, to the ends of docility and productivity is, according to Foucault, enacted by the state through spatial partition and enclosure, the inscription of certain spaces as productive, the control of bodily activity and the definition and enforcement of ideals of physical beauty and productivity as well as through the imposition of concepts of personal development as linear progression and the creation of self-regulating social groups with their own hierarchies.[21] Yet it seems that Foucault's concepts – both in their original European historical setting, but also in their applicability to a contemporary postcolonial world - suggest a compulsion to action and to discipline that exerts itself from *outside* the state and is international in nature. Inasmuch as structures such as Westphalian statehood, state nationalism, global economic systems and realist

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[16] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, 1st American ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 135-169.

[17] Ibid., 135.

[18] Ibid., 168. See also Foucault's trenchant critique of fascism: Michel Foucault, "Introduction," in Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (New York: Viking, 1977).

[19] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 136.

[20] Ibid., 141fn.

[21] Ibid., 141-65.

understandings of state security (guaranteed through legitimised systems of inter- and intra-state violence) form part of the agreed terms of international relations and the shared logic of a global community of states, then such concerns cannot fail but to be reflected in a state's internal politics and the social formations which are subject to such politics. For a small state such as Singapore, these forces are perhaps more keenly felt than in other postcolonial societies. The familiar Singaporean tropes of national vulnerability - struggling against the odds, the questionable viability of an island city-state without a national hinterland, military insecurity, economic exposure to the ebbs and flows of global capital, a small population and a tiny geographical landmass with negligible natural resources - all contribute to this phenomenon. Disciplining bodies in Singapore might be justified as of service to the nation, but the impetus to do so is, more often than not, derived from, and explained with reference to, the external.

Leong's critique of the Singapore National Day parades demonstrates the ways in many of these disciplining methodologies are deployed within the space of the parades and highlights the overtly gendered nature of the subjectivities created in, and displayed by, the parades. He writes that

> The military drill and march symbolize the nation in its orderliness, discipline and obedience under a controlling center….Their unique identities submerged and drowned in uniform, the soldiers assume the psyche of a collective conscience as they parade in a series of formations that are artfully coordinated….The militarization of National Day parades renders the parade a ritual of power and hierarchy, dramatizes the state's monopoly of force, personifies the nation by underscoring values of order, discipline and regimentation, and reassures the populace in the face of anxiety. In addition, the militarization of the parade masculinizes the nation.[22]

The most obvious connection between constructions of individual and state masculinity, nationalism and the parade can be identified in the participation of both full time and operationally ready/reservist national servicemen in the parade. We have already seen the ways in which military display is not merely a patriotic spectacle but also a demonstration to Singapore's international neighbours of the island's security and defence capabilities. Gender is an integral part of this picture. ""National service" in Singapore" writes Leong, "is clearly a gendered term referring to the military conscription of male youths".[23] Enforced participation in a National Day parade, as part of either a marching contingent or organisational group, is a common experience for Singaporean men: "army boys are compelled to represent their units, to put up the stages, to marshal the crowds

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[22] Leong Wai Teng, *Consuming the Nation*, 7-8.
[23] Ibid., 8.

or to clean up the aftermath".[24] Those appearing in the Parade itself are subject to special scrutiny: "The men selected for the Guard of Honour must be around 1.68m tall and look smart in their ceremonial dress. No bow legs and better yet, if spectacles can be done away with for the occasion." [25] Yet the militarization of the state, and the international messages depicted in the parade are communicated in ways that extend far beyond the mere involvement of the armed forces. The participation of youth uniformed groups, civilian contingents represented by government appointees, and private organisations led by males who are identified by their military ranks and roles as reservist national servicemen further contributes to the militarization process.[26] The running order for the 2004 parade, shows that, in addition to the large military presence, those marching included uniformed youth groups such as the National Cadet Corps, the National Police Cadet Corps, the Singapore Scouts Association, the Singapore Girl Guides Association, the Boys Brigade and the Girls Brigade and civilian groups such as the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) and the government-linked National Trade Unions Congress (NTUC).[27]

Other gendered and international meanings also circulate within the parade and in the way it is constituted. Most notable here are the roles played by women in the parade. In the ceremonial aspects of the parade, dominated by the military (which in turn, through compulsory male conscription, is an almost exclusively male preserve), women are largely absent and, where present, participate as members of uniformed groups such as the Girl Guides and the Girls Brigade, or as members of civilian defence organisations. Leong sardonically notes:

> There is no feminine analogue to "national service"; if there were, the most likely candidate would be a contingent of pregnant women marching in university gowns and mortarboards. Graduate mothers who procreate in line with the eugenic policy that the more educated a woman is, the more children she should have, would be deemed to have executed their duties and responsibilities of "national service".[28]

Yet feminine identities do figure in the representations of nation that are packaged for and constituted around the National Day celebrations. Most obviously this can be seen in the far greater level of women's participation in those sections of the parade following the ceremonial review and military manoeuvres and drills. These sections, more show-like and celebratory in nature, involve

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[24] Ibid., 11. See also Kong and Yeoh, "The Construction of National Identity," 234.
[25] Koh Boon Pin and Lee Geok Boi, *Shoulder to Shoulder: Our National Service Journal* (Singapore: Ministry of Defence (Singapore), 2002), 138.
[26] Leong Wai Teng, *Consuming the Nation*, 6.
[27] NDP 04 EXCO, *National Day Parade 2004 - People: UYOs and Civilian Organisations* (NDP 04 EXCO, 2004, accessed 8 July 2004); available from http://www.ndp.org.sg/ndp04/the_ndp/pnc3_uyo.html.
[28] Leong Wai Teng, *Consuming the Nation*, 8.

Singaporean children, youth groups, musicians, cultural performances, fireworks displays and video presentations. It appears that only once the masculine rituals of the nation have been performed, and the soldiers have left the parade field, are women, children and Singaporean cultural life allowed to take to the stage. The masculinization of issues of politics and defence stands in stark contrast with the feminisation of culture, ethnicity, child-rearing and the arts. This immediately calls to mind the vignette with which I presented in my opening remarks to this section of the thesis: the counterpoised national service camouflage uniform and the Singapore Airlines *sarong kebaya* in the Millennium Time Capsule catalogue. Because, almost inevitably, the Singapore Girl has her part to play in representing nation at National Day – and references a deeply international set of meanings. Reading the images of the Singapore Girl presented in a video presentation designed for screening in the lead-up to and during the National Day parade, Peterson notes that "Singapore Airlines and the ubiquitous "Singapore Girl" project a positive international image of the country."[29] Indeed the correlation of femininity with culture links the Time Capsule with the parade in other ways. Among the other items included in the Time Capsule was a selection of clothes described in the catalogue as "some of our ethnic costumes…symbols of our multicultural society".[30] What is significant is that the clothes included in the time capsule – a *cheongsam*, a *baju kurong,* a *sari* and a *sarong kebaya* - are all examples of women's clothing, drawn from some of the various ethnic groups that constitute Singapore. Culture, here, is explicitly feminised, in comparison with the gestures towards a masculine modernity referenced by the inclusion of the camouflage uniform.[31] Similarly the National Day parades present culture and ethnic identity as subordinate to the affairs of the state, co-opted in the service of nationalist economic and ideological goals. Indeed, the increasing duration and significance of those portions of the parade that involve cultural performances and more overt celebrations has been identified as part of a strategy by political elites in Singapore to win popular consent for state policies and to further contribute to the creation of nationalist identities.[32] The feminisation of culture thus serves the dual purpose of ensuring that ethnic

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[29] William Peterson, *Theater and the Politics of Culture in Contemporary Singapore* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 77.

[30] Singapore History Museum, *Singapore at the Turn of the Millennium Catalogue* (Singapore: Singapore History Museum, National Heritage Board, Government of Singapore, 1999), 5.

[31] It is interesting to note that the ethnic clothes are described in the exhibition catalogue as ethnic *costumes*. There seems to be a distinct division drawn between economically and militarily "useful" identities such as those referenced by the military uniform and the Singapore Airlines uniform (note that these are both *uniforms*) and those from the realm of culture which are feminised and deemed essentially theatrical, referencing an past marked by ethnicity and cultural division as opposed to a future of modernity and economic development under the umbrella of the "multiracial" nation state.

[32] Leong Wai Teng, *Consuming the Nation*, 3-4.

identities do not emerge as rivals to a stable national identity based on "secular, non-cultural national values"[33] as well as rendering culture of economic value in terms of ongoing state cohesion and as a tourist commodity.

The bodies disciplined and displayed to meet the challenges of Singapore's international position and contribute to its economic growth, internal stability and cohesion occupy both male and female subjectivities. And while dissenters are never made a part of National Day celebrations,[34] it is also possible to see how the construction of gendered subjectivities within Singapore both regulates and shapes modes of dissent and informs any challenge to state hegemony. In the latter part of this chapter I turn to a specific instance of Singaporean state involvement in the constitution and disciplining of masculine subjectivities – and some specific performances of masculinity in Singapore. In each of these instances, it is possible to see how the disciplining and militarization of Singapore society creates gendered subjectivities that specifically engage many aspects of Singapore's international position, foreign policies and economic pursuits. Singaporean masculinities are thus a very different, but no less useful, point of analysis for students of the international than the more conventional disciplinary concerns of state behaviour, diplomacy, strategic considerations, trade relations or national capacity.

The continuance of national service, that system of universal male conscription and military training in Singapore, is most commonly justified by the Singapore government as being required to secure the country's territorial sovereignty through the provision of a credible defence force able to deter aggression and ensure decisive victory should conflict arise.[35] Given Singapore's small geographical size, dependence on neighbouring states for basic resources and a population of citizens and permanent residents of just four million, compulsory military service is presented as the only viable means of providing such national defensive capability.[36] Yet, despite such concerns,

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[33] Kong and Yeoh, "The Construction of National Identity," 231.

[34] Ibid.: 228.

[35] Dan Yock Hau, "Conscription and Force Transformation," *Pointer: Journal of the Singapore Armed Forces* 29, no. 4 (2003).

[36] Tim Huxley, *Defending the Lion City: The Armed Forces of Singapore* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000), The Singapore Army, *Our Army: The Decisive Force - About Our Army* (Government of Singapore, 2003, accessed 16 July 2004); available from http://www.mindef.gov.sg/army/about.htm, "SAF Now Leaner, More Capable," *The Straits Times*, 16 June 2004, Philippe Regnier, *Singapore: City State in South-East Asia*, trans. Christopher Hurst (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1991), 254, Derek da Cunha, "Defence and Security: Evolving Threat Perceptions," in *Singapore in the New Millennium: Challenges Facing the City-State*, ed. Derek da Cunha (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002).

regularly communicated to the public by the ruling People's Action Party government, and performed in rituals such as the National Day parades, conscription of the male population into the armed and civil defence forces is not directed solely to the end of national defence. The phenomenon of national service acts to create and reinforce certain aspects of Singaporean social, political and economic life that link individual subjects to profoundly international concerns of the Singapore state.

Most obviously, national service presents national sovereignty, territorial integrity and even ownership of the state, as gendered: an individual and collective responsibility of Singapore men. This process is perhaps best captured in Darren Shiau's coming-of-age novel *Heartland.* In a scene immediately following the protagonist's conscription into military service, a group of recruits are taken to a vantage point on Singapore's Pulau Tekong, the offshore island where the initial basic military training course is conducted. Having been both symbolically set apart from the everyday life of Singapore society (through the rituals of military induction) and physically isolated from it (by confinement to the island military camp) the recruits, with their platoon commander, look back to the Singapore mainland.

> Gentlemen, what you have before you is the country you are going to defend. On it are your families and your girlfriends. And what me, your platoon sergeant and your section commanders will train you to do in the next few months is to defend it…Remember – don't do this for anybody. Do it for yourself. Take your tour of duty seriously because you believe you want to keep Singapore safe.[37]

Here, the masculinism of the commander's address to the new conscripts is combined with a feminising of the physical space of the Singapore nation and its identification as the location of women, family and social life. While issues of family and of women's roles are described in more detail below, the fictional excerpt also demonstrates the extent to which territorial vulnerability and border protection are abiding preoccupations within Singaporean politics, referenced in the individual person of the national serviceman produced by military training. Charlotte Hooper has suggested that the discipline of international relations "has played an important part in not only reflecting and legitimating specific masculinities, but also in constructing and defining them."[38] She goes on to suggest that Anglo-American (and by extension, forms of colonial and postcolonial) masculinities have always been shaped by "an encounter with the "international" realm beyond the borders of the state and/or "civilization"" and that this encounter gives rise to certain ideal

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[37] Daren V. L. Shiau, *Heartland*, Advance reading ed. (Singapore: Ethos Books, 2001), 103-4.
[38] Charlotte Hooper, *Manly States: Masculinities, International Relations and Gender Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 219.

masculine types such as the citizen-warrior, the bourgeois rational man and the patriarch.[39] Singapore servicemen are trained not just to defend the territorial sovereignty of the Singapore state by force of arms but also to understand, in almost classically realist terms of reference, the supposed external challenges Singapore faces in its international relations. Such an education in the *realpolitik* of international relations acts to inform and shape Singapore masculinities and it can be argued that it gives rise, within Singapore society, to many of the ideal masculine types Hooper identifies.

This is not, however, a purely post-independence phenomenon. The shaping of colonial masculinities in Singapore, and that process' connection to military service and conscription, has a long history. As we have already seen, contemporary Singapore's relationship with its colonial past is ambivalent and multifaceted. Conscription in Singapore was first introduced not by the post-independence leadership but by the British administration and even prior to the introduction of conscription, military service had long been the yardstick against which colonial citizenship in the Straits Settlements had been measured. For successive colonial regimes, military training, discipline and physical improvement were means by which perceived cultural deficiencies such as laziness, hedonism, homosexuality and above all effeminacy, could be eradicated or governed. Interestingly, while these measures were aimed mostly at the Malay population of the peninsula,[40] (and indeed the Malays were often regarded by the British as both more pliable recruits and more enthusiastic soldiers than the supposedly commerce-driven Chinese) they were adopted most enthusiastically amongst an elite, often Western-educated, minority of the Chinese in Singapore. Philip Holden has traced the emergence of a political consciousness amongst this Chinese population of the Straits Settlements, which coalesced around a martial masculinity dedicated to physical, mental and moral self-improvement and a gendered division between public and private domains.[41] Reading publications of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as the *Straits Chinese Magazine,* Holden argues that the concern was to "produce a Muscular Confucianism, a modern, male, middle-class Chinese subject, marked by self-regulation….Just like Baden-Powell, Lim [Boon Keng, the magazine's editor] advocated rigorous physical training to regenerate the "race of weaklings"

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[39] Ibid., 221.
[40] I explore this theme extensively in a later chapter, "Sodomy as Metaphor".
[41] Philip Holden, "The Beginnings of 'Asian Modernity' in Singapore: A Straits Chinese Body Project," *Communal/Plural* 7, no. 1 (1999).

which the Straits Chinese had become".[42] Military service was of central importance to this reshaping – as was the adoption of a stridently colonial form of masculine subjectivity. Clammer argues that

> [t]he proud embracing of British citizenship, the adoption of the tag "The King's Chinese", the efforts made to found a Baba company in the Singapore militia were…something of a paradox…the Babas did not become British culturally, but took advantage of colonization to establish their own culture in a friendly environment[43]

This gendered process of "earning" citizenship rights through military service is of course reflected in today's Singapore, where national service is often discussed as being the "price" of residency, citizenship and social status for Singaporean men.[44] National service remains a central factor in the development of an appropriately masculine contemporary male Singaporean subject. In an article reflecting on 35 years of national service, published in the magazine of the Singapore International Foundation (a government-funded organisation dedicated to creating links between Singapore and its overseas citizens and supporters) the enduring effect of national service on masculine identity was enthusiastically promoted.

> What has not changed is NS [national service] as a rite of passage for every male Singaporean. He enters the army as a boy and comes out a confident young man, perhaps even an officer and a gentleman. It's amazing what military training can do for you.[45]

This trope of character development – boys being transformed into men by the shared hardships of military training and discipline – is a common one within Singaporean popular culture. A recent anthology bringing together literary responses to national service by Singaporean authors was titled *From Boys to Men*[46] and the theme is extensively explored in Singaporean novels, poetry, theatre, television and film.[47] Speaking in the Singapore parliament recently, the Defence Minister, Rear-Admiral Teo Chee Hean reaffirmed that character development would continue as an

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[42] Philip Holden, *Modern Subjects/Colonial Texts: Hugh Clifford and the Discipline of English Literature in the Straits Settlements and Malaya 1895-1907* (Greensboro: ELT Press, 2000), 124.

[43] John R. Clammer, *Straits Chinese Society: Studies in the Sociology of the Baba Communities of Malaysia and Singapore* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1980), 127-8. For a fictional account of this process, see: C. M. Woon, *The Advocate's Devil* (Singapore: Times Books International, 2002), 45.

[44] Kenneth Paul Tan, ""Civic Society" And The "New Economy" In Patriarchal Singapore: Emasculating the Political, Feminizing the Public," *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 15, no. 2 (2001): 110.

[45] Lee Geok Boi, *Citizen Soldiers: Singapore Celebrates 35 Years of National Service* (Singapore International Foundation, Oct-Dec 2002, accessed 14 July 2004); available from http://www.sgezine.com.sg/centrepiece/1002ns.html.

[46] Koh Buck Song and Umej Bhatia, eds., *From Boys to Men: A Literary Anthology of National Service in Singapore* (Singapore: Landmark Books, 2002).

[47] See: Joash Moo, *Sisterhood: The Untold Story* (Singapore and Kuala Lumpur: Times Books International, 1990), 25-33, Ong Keng Sen (Director), "Army Daze the Movie: From Blur to Real Man," (Singapore: Cathay Asia Films, 1996), Alfian Sa'at, "Half a Soldier," in A History of Amnesia: Poems by Alfian Sa'at, by Alfian Sa'at (Singapore: Ethos Books, 2002), Alfian Sa'at, "Ode to the Army," in One Fierce Hour, by Alfian Sa'at (Singapore: Landmark Books, 1998), Michael Chiang, *Michael Chiang's Army Daze: The Play* (Singapore: Landmark Books, 1987).

important aspect of national service training and that Singaporean parents could be assured that their sons would "go into national service as boys and come out as men ready to defend the nation."[48]

But the character development component of the national service experience goes beyond the ascription of manhood to those who have completed their 2 to 2 and a half years of full time military service. Christopher Tremewan has described national service as part of a political economy of social control in Singapore, acting to constitute citizens who are politically docile, economically productive and fundamentally aware of the power the state can wield over the physical bodies and public and private spaces of its citizens.[49] The crafting of Singaporean masculine subjectivities through national service operates to both fulfil domestic requirements and to reflect international exigencies well beyond concerns about the protection of borders and state sovereignty. Several areas of Singaporean everyday life in which national service intervenes to construct masculine subjectivities with reference to the international suggest themselves here.

The first is the imbrication of national service and the Singapore Armed forces with issues of commerce and the economy. Conscription in Singapore has often been explained in terms of it both complementing and enabling national economic development and growth. A common argument turns on the fact that given Singapore's small population size, a large standing army of professional soldiers (as opposed to conscripts and reservists) would lead to competition with the economy for access to financial resources and personnel, with negative consequences for economic growth rates and living standards.[50] Allied to these economically rationalist arguments is the belief that national service acts to construct an ideal male worker-citizen, trained to participate productively in either public or private sector employment and contribute to national growth and economic stability. As Selvan suggests, due to national service, the male Singaporean emerges as "a well-drilled and well-armed citizen geared towards a rugged, disciplined and regimented society."[51] National service, therefore, acts not just to shape military identities, but also to militarise the economy and the workplace.[52] In a National University of Singapore study of the effects of conscription on nation-building in Singapore, Elizabeth Nair found that

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[48] "SAF Now Leaner, More Capable." For an interesting, though now dated account of the effect of national service on individuals see Leong Choon Cheong, *Youth in the Army* (Singapore: Federal Publications, 1978).

[49] Christopher Tremewan, *The Political Economy of Social Control in Singapore* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press in association with St Antony's College, 1994), 221-27.

[50] Central Manpower Base, *My Son the NS Man: What Parents Should Know About NS*, 17th ed. (Singapore: Central Manpower Base, Ministry of Defence, Government of Singapore, 2003), 2.

[51] T.S. Selvan, *Singapore: The Ultimate Island (Lee Kuan Yew's Untold Story)* (Melbourne: Freeway Books, 1990), 39.

[52] Tremewan, *The Political Economy of Social Control in Singapore*, 221-222.

> Employers were…reported to be positive about receiving soldiers who could be relied on to carry out their jobs in a responsible and disciplined manner. The [military] commanders cited this aspect of the character of the Singapore workforce as contributing towards the efficiency and prosperity of the thriving economy. The discipline and perseverance under stress inculcated in military training, and the ability to work as a team, setting aside personal differences, were cited as lessons learned in national service, carried over to civilian life.[53]

Regular statements from government and business leaders regarding the perceived vulnerability of Singapore's economy to the fluctuations of the global economic system ensures that the disciplining of the individual national serviceman to serve national economic ends is of great significance within Singapore. But this process also references themes of international economic legitimacy and prestige, together with concepts of Singapore's place within global economic systems. L. H. M. Ling has explained the militarization of Southeast Asian state economies in gendered terms by presenting a series of hierarchical relationships of economic dominance. While these begin well outside the postcolonial state, with the dominance of Western capital over Asian cultures and societies, they have their greatest impact within the state, as they lead to hyper-masculinised governments feminising their societies and populations as a tool of regulation and control. This in turn, according to Ling, leads to male dominance over women and other feminised subjectivities within postcolonial societies and cultures.[54] Yeoh and Willis have applied similar forms of analysis to Singapore's attempts at regional economic expansion arguing that the process of international economic expansion is intrinsically masculine and acts to transnationalise and reinforce existing gender divisions in the Singaporean workforce.[55]

Such processes have significant resonance with the second area in which international issues are processed through the construction of masculine subjectivities in national service: the management of racial diversity within Singapore. National service is regularly presented as a bulwark against the rise of ethnic nationalism emerging in opposition to state sanctioned notions of Singaporean identity. Arguing along these lines, a recent academic study reported in the *Straits Times* newspaper described the shared experience of military training in Singapore as "a social distillery for ethnic cohesion".[56] The supposed transcendence of issues of race in national service is not, however, as clear-cut or as apparent as this study might suggest. Indeed, while singling out relations

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[53] Elizabeth Nair, *Conscription and Nation Building in Singapore: A Psychological Analysis* (Singapore: Department of Social Work and Pyschology, National University of Singapore, 1994), 17.
[54] L. H. M. Ling, "Cultural Chauvinism and the Liberal International Order: "West versus Rest" In Asia's Financial Crisis," in *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender and Class*, ed. Geeta Chowdhry and Sheila Nair (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 129.
[55] Brenda S.A. Yeoh and Katie Willis, "'Heart' and 'Wing', Nation and Diaspora: Gendered Discourses in Singapore's Regionalisation Process," *Gender, Place and Culture* 6, no. 4 (1999): 365-366.
[56] M. Nirmala, "NS a Social Distillery for Ethnic Cohesion," *The Straits Times*, 11 November 2002.

between Malay Muslim and other Singaporean ethnic and religious communities for special attention, the reported study acknowledged that information regarding the ethnic composition of the Singapore Armed Forces was not available.[57] Here, colonial and independence histories become of interest to the ways in which gendered understandings, arguably of the style identified by Ling, underpin the racial makeup of the Singapore Armed Forces. Commentators have pointed to the ambivalent relationship between Malay Singaporeans and postcolonial notions of Singaporean nationalism and identity. Malay Singaporeans have been portrayed as having questionable or divided loyalties toward the postcolonial state, due to both their physical proximity to, and extensive familial and economic ties with, Malaysia as well as their profession of the Islamic faith.[58] So much of contemporary Singaporean nationalism has been geared to towards distinguishing Singapore from independent Malaysia (of which it was formerly – if briefly – a part) that Malay Muslim Singaporeans have often been regarded by the state with suspicion and fear and have themselves felt alienated and excluded from concepts of Singaporean nationalism or citizenship.[59] Along these lines, post-independence Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew once likened Singapore's international position to "an Israel in a Malay-Muslim sea".[60] National service thus both acts to create social cohesion amongst those selected for military service but also acts to reinforce ethnic divisions along internationally signified lines in the separation between those males selected for service in the Singapore Armed Forces and those who are required to serve in the less prestigious, and less sensitive areas of civil defence such as civil rescue, fire fighting and policing.[61] Exploring this phenomenon, Milne and Mauzy write that

> Before independence the Malays dominated the police and army ranks. After independence it was decided that the military should reflect the ethnic composition of the state. Consequently, many Malays were deliberately not conscripted, which took away a chief avenue of upward mobility…Since

[57] Ibid.

[58] Raj Vasil, *Asianising Singapore: The PAP's Management of Ethnicity* (Singapore: Heinemann Asia, 1995), 108. Nirmala PuruShotam, *Negotiating Multiculturalism: Disciplining Difference in Singapore*, ed. Joshua A. Fishman, Contributions to the Sociology of Language, vol. 79 (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2000), 215-216.

[59] Hussin Mutalib, "Singapore's Quest for a National Identity: The Triumphs and Trials of Government Policies," in *Imagining Singapore*, ed. Ban Kah Choon, Anne Pakir, and Tong Chee Kiong (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2004), 69-72.

[60] C. Mary Turnbull, *A History of Singapore, 1819-1975* (Kuala Lumpur and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 330, Michael D. Barr, *Lee Kuan Yew: The Beliefs Behind the Man* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000), 232. In 1999, commenting on racial integration within the Singapore military Lee Kuan Yew also stated that "If, for instance, you put in a Malay officer who's very religious and who has family ties in Malaysia in charge of a machine gun unit, that's a very tricky business.': "Singapore Malay Muslims Want More Integration: Report," *Associated Press*, 11 March 2001.

[61] Tania Li, *Malays in Singapore: Culture, Economy, and Ideology*, East Asian Social Science Monographs. (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989), 108-109, Diane K. Mauzy and R.S. Milne, *Singapore Politics under the People's Action Party*, ed. Michael Leifer, Politics in Asia (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 109-111.

the mid-1980s they have been called up but they are mostly shunted off to police or civil defense units.[62]

Analysis of the ways in which racial divisions are defined and fixed with reference to gendered terms and understandings – most notably seen in the work on the relationship between colonial power and race, sexuality and gender by Ann Laura Stoler – offers significant insights to reading the international and gendered implications of this process.[63] If Singaporean manhood, and even male citizenship, is to be earned through national service, and most obviously and completely by service in one of the branches of the Singapore Armed Forces, such ethnic discrimination must be seen to have a pervasively gendered dimension. Revisiting Ling's work on postcolonial hierarchies of dominance, it is possible to see how gendering processes, with their referents outside the Singapore state, nonetheless act to masculinise the Chinese majority in Singapore and inform Chinese economic, social and political dominance over feminised ethnic minorities.

Most significantly, in its construction of appropriate gender roles, national service also acts to construct and enforce approved notions of sexual behaviour. Sexuality is intricately bound up in the conceptions of appropriate subjectivity that circulate within the experience of national service. Most obvious here is the construction of compulsory heterosexuality within military life[64]. National service acts to powerfully convey state approval of heterosexuality and to construct appropriate forms of gendered heterosexual behaviour in both male conscripts and female Singaporeans. As the Singapore International Foundation describes it:

> [M]others, sisters and wives look after their sons, brothers and husbands in a variety of ways when their men are doing military service. Anyone who lives in a Housing Board estate always knows when a neighbour's NS-age son is home from camp: there is a line of army uniforms flapping in the breeze outside the flat. Families with NSmen find their family plans revolve around their training or exercises. Wives, girlfriends and mothers know to tell their nearest and dearest about mobilisation exercises.[65]

Women's roles are here defined both in terms of their heterosexually coded roles and behaviours (as mothers, wives and girlfriends) and in terms of women's support for men's military

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[62] Mauzy and Milne, *Singapore Politics under the People's Action Party*, 109.
[63] See generally: Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1997), 24-29. Ann Laura Stoler, "Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Gender, Race and Morality in Colonial Asia," in *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era*, ed. Michaela di Leonardo (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991).
[64] The concept of compulsory heterosexuality is, of course, from Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Lesbian Existence," in *Blood, Bread and Poetry: Selected Prose 1978-1985*, ed. Adrienne Rich (New York: Norton, 1986).
[65] Lee Geok Boi, *Citizen Soldiers: Singapore Celebrates 35 Years of National Service* (accessed).

responsibilities and obligations.[66] The Singapore Defence Minister also raised this phenomenon in a recent speech, saying that "when the young men go for NS [national service], some of the junior college girls turn up to cheer them on when they go in and get enlisted. I think that is very good, that is very positive."[67] Within national service itself, the normalisation of heterosexuality and patriarchy is accomplished through a variety of means. Most obviously the coding of national service as a masculine space acts to alienate women from access to social groupings, knowledges and linguistic terms (technical jargon, slang etc) common to the experience of compulsory military service and training, as well as from the social privileges bestowed on those who have fulfilled their national obligations through such service.[68] As we have seen, national service figures military defence of the nation as a masculine responsibility to defend a feminised homeland on which mothers, wives, girlfriends and sisters (again, defined by their positions within a heteropatriarchal social milieu) are located. The social implications of this process are reflected - with a nod to the connections between national service and national economic aspirations - in Andrew Koh's novel *Glass Cathedral.*

> The fashion was for the men to impress the women not through academic prowess but through all important 'personal experiences'. National service counted as working experience and, in this economic miracle of an island, work is the *raison d'être* of one's patriotism. The women, of course, had not the privilege of serving the nation without remuneration. Social work did not count. Neither did motherhood. Hence, canteen stories of cliff climbing, parachuting, crawling and hacking through the jungle, going to Taiwan for tiger shows both in the battle field and in the bars, exercises in prophylactic security with broomsticks and bananas as simulated weapons; these were the stuff of what it meant to be a man, the progressive Singaporean male, trained to wield the powers of leadership. Maturity of mind and body was part of the package.[69]

The processes of military training in Singapore, the ways in which it is conducted as well as the discourses that surround are also pervaded by heteropatriarchal ideologies and practises. To take a recent example, the lavishly illustrated volume *Shoulder to Shoulder*, which was released in 2002 to celebrate the 35th anniversary of national service in Singapore contains numerous illustrations of the ways in which heterosexuality is deployed as a compulsory category in the experience of national service. Images of male soldiers dreaming of beautiful women,[70] references to a recruit graduating from basic training in front of "my parents and my girl",[71] to a soldier's rifle being

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[66] See generally on this Koh Buck Song and Umej Bhatia, "Introduction," in *From Boys to Men: A Literary Anthology of National Service in Singapore*, ed. Koh Buck Song and Umej Bhatia (Singapore: Landmark Books, 2002), 18-19.
[67] Teo Chee Hean, "Public Shows Strong Support for Defence," *The Straits Times*, 1 July 2004.
[68] Tan, ""Civic Society" And The "New Economy" In Patriarchal Singapore," 99.
[69] Andrew Koh, *Glass Cathedral* (Singapore: EPB Publishers, 1995), 4-5.
[70] Koh Boon Pin and Lee Geok Boi, *Shoulder to Shoulder*, 68.
[71] Ibid., 85.

referred to as his "wife",[72] to soldiers ogling women in bikinis[73] or hanging heterosexual pornography in their bunk room[74] and phenomena such as "show girlfriend parade"[75] (where a recruit is expected to produce a female friend during an allowed visit to the military camp) or military haircuts making men less able to "pick up girls"[76] are a consistent theme of the book. Extraordinarily, the government funded volume (which was provided free to all serving soldiers in 2002 and which is prefaced by letters of support from both the Prime Minister and Defence Minister) contains a full page picture of the leaf of the *Dillenia suffruticosa* plant, commonly referred to in Singapore military parlance as "CB leaf" (referencing a vulgar Hokkien expression for female genitalia) overprinted with a line from Michael Chiang's play *Army Daze*: "One day when you grow up, you will know why this is called a CB leaf."[77] Unmooring the originally sardonic reference in Chiang's play from its context, *Shoulder to Shoulder* presents misogynist thinking and language as part of the national service rite of passage, acting to admit men to a fraternal bond of shared and assumed heterosexuality.[78]

There is a large body of intellectual work that has sought to explain the postcolonial state's obsession with normalising and reinventing heteropatriarchal structures (which are often colonially-derived) in the service of nationalist goals and with configuring the national space as thoroughly heterosexual.[79] This of course reaches its apotheosis in the Singapore context with the government pre-occupation with biological reproduction as expressed through pro-natalist policies and the regulation of women's bodies and fertility, which I discuss in more detail in the following chapter. Interestingly, it also engages the arguments regarding the construction of a continued political, social and demographic pre-eminence for and by the Chinese in Singapore. While I have already discussed this in the context of the allocation of military responsibilities, it is possible to broaden such arguments to examine how reproductive policy and the Singapore government's obsession

[72] Ibid., 39.
[73] Ibid., 53.
[74] Ibid., 56.
[75] Ibid., 42.
[76] Ibid., 31.
[77] Ibid., 61. For the original context see: Michael Chiang, *Private Parts and Other Play Things: A Collection of Popular Singapore Comedies* (Singapore: Landmark Books, 1994), 59.
[78] The text of *Shoulder to Shoulder* explicitly underlines this point: "Through the banter one invariably picks up army lingo or colourful expressions in several languages and dialects, usually referring to different body parts. Army-speak hasn't changed over the years – CB leaf, for example, will remain resonant with National Servicemen for as long as the plant – *Dillenia suffffruticosa* – exists." Koh Boon Pin and Lee Geok Boi, *Shoulder to Shoulder*, 25.
[79] For a representative example, see: M. Jacqui Alexander, "Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas Tourist Economy," in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, ed. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Thinking Gender (New York and London: Routledge, 1997).

with heterosexuality in the service of biological reproduction of the nation, hinges as Heng and Devan argue "precisely on a wishful fantasy of exact self-replication…[positing], as the essential condition of national survival, the regeneration of the country's population (its heterogenous national body) in such ratios of race and class as would faithfully mirror the population's original composition at the nation's founding moment".[80]

Yet before shifting the frame of reference away from masculinity and masculine military subjectivities, it is important to note both the international register of debates over reproductive heterosexuality and the ways in which certain forms of masculine heterosexuality have been marshalled and constructed to meet these internationalised challenges. Many commentators have observed the ways in which citizen support for both authoritarian governance and social control in Singapore is constructed through the regular deployment of "crisis narratives" by the Singaporean PAP government.[81] These crises – often turning on issues of national strategic, economic or cultural vulnerability,[82] and more recently the threat of terrorism[83] - are almost all international in flavour. Yet they have recently been joined by another "crisis" which, while appearing to be deeply domestic in nature, has been presented by Singaporean state managers as intrinsically international in consequence: the threat of population decline.[84] Speaking at the 2000 National Day Rally, then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong laid out the problem in the following terms:

> If our current fertility rate stays at 1.48, without immigration, in 50 years, our resident population will fall from 3.2 million to 2.7 million. The resident labour force will decrease by more than a quarter. How can we sustain economic growth? How can we support our elders? How can we defend ourselves?[85]

As Ortmann argues, this internationally imbued "crisis" of Singaporean national and civic reproduction demonstrates the linkages – in the minds of both political elites and their citizen-subjects - between population decline and Singaporean national and economic survival.[86] Much

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80 Geraldine Heng and Janadas Devan, "State Fatherhood: The Politics of Nationalism, Sexuality and Race in Singapore," in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, ed. Andrew Parker et al. (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 344.
81 Stephan Ortmann, "Legitimacy and the National Threat in Singapore (Legitimität und die nationale Gefahr in Singapur)" (Magisterarbeit, Friedrich-Alexander Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, 2003), Heng and Devan, "State Fatherhood," 343-344, Ien Ang and Jon Stratton, "Straddling East and West: Singapore's Paradoxical Search for National Identity," in *Asian and Pacific Inscriptions: Identities, Ethnicities, Nationalities*, ed. Suvendrini Perera (Bundoora: Meridian, 1995), 182.
82 Ortmann, "Legitimacy and the National Threat in Singapore", 34-84.
83 National Security Coordination Centre, *The Fight against Terror: Singapore's National Security Strategy* (Singapore: National Security Coordination Centre, 2004).
84 Heng and Devan, "State Fatherhood," 343-351.
85 Goh Chok Tong, *Transforming Singapore: Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong's National Day Rally 2000 Speech in English* (Media Division, Ministry of Information and the Arts, Government of Singapore, 2000, accessed 2 November 2004); available from http://www.gov.sg/nd/ND00.htm.
86 Ortmann, "Legitimacy and the National Threat in Singapore", 85.

public debate on this issue within Singapore has been centred on threats to Singapore's international economic reputation and on the likely impact that declining birth rates will have on the pool of available male conscripts for the Singapore Armed Forces.[87] This goes some way to explaining the preoccupation with heterosexuality on the part of the Singaporean military hierarchy. As part of their pre–enlistment medical examination all Singapore males are asked to disclose their sexual orientation. The questionnaire provided to all pre-enlistees asks "Do you have any medical/social/personal problems (e.g. homosexuality) that you wish to tell the Medical Officer in private?"[88] The fact that homosexuality is the only exemplar provided on the form of such social "problems" (and that heterosexuality is the default, assumed condition) indicates a nervousness surrounding issues of sexual difference on the part of military and governmental bureaucracies. It also signals the seriousness with which any threats to the structural privileging of heterosexuality (in terms of both its social and reproductive aspects) within both the Singapore Armed Forces and the broader Singapore state are taken. The consequences of disclosure of a non-heterosexual identity are explored in Johann S. Lee's novel *Peculiar Chris*, where the protagonist, having disclosed his homosexuality to a military testing officer is confronted with the following response:

> I don't think you are aware of the seriousness and consequences of your declaration…[I]f you are classified as a homosexual the government will henceforth be informed of your orientation. I doubt you will ever find employment in the civil service and I am sure that you will not qualify for any scholarship, grant or bursary.…Although the information you provide will be protected under the security classification of "medical-in-confidence", you should know that access to your medical docket will be within the means of common medical orderlies who are usually young men such as yourself. Thus, you will find it quite impossible to maintain any secrecy with regards to this matter. Do you comprehend?[89]

Yet, the medical screening form – and the consequences of departing from the heterosexual norm – can be read as a far more subtle exercise in panoptic state power than this blunt dialogue might suggest. They construct a preferred Singaporean homosexual subject who does not, to echo the words of the medical form, *wish* to become a "social problem" through disclosure of a non-heterosexual sexual identity. The problem the form identifies is not so much homosexuality, *per se*, but the visible and assertive homosexual subject who could emerge as a threat to reproductive conjugal heterosexuality, and thus, in terms of the state's crisis narrative, the

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[87] David Boey, "What Fewer Babies May Mean for SAF Planners," *The Straits Times*, 17 December 2003.
[88] Medical Classification Centre (Central Manpower Base Singapore Army), *Medical Screening Questionnaire* (Green Dot Internet Services Pte Ltd, 18 December 2003, accessed 6 September 2004); available from http://content.miw.com.sg/Mindef/Static/NSRegistration/Pdf/CMPBQuestionnaire.pdf.
[89] Johann S. Lee, *Peculiar Chris* (Singapore: Cannon International, 1992), 52-3. This fictional response is now a little dated; in 2004 Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong announced that the civil service in Singapore would employ homosexuals, provided they disclosed their sexual orientation": Simon Elegant, "The Lion in Winter," *Time Asia*, 7 July 2003, 35-36.

existence, reproduction and security of the state itself. The problem, so far as military and state elites in Singapore is concerned, is the desire to self-identify as non-heterosexual. The form therefore enacts a double closure for Singaporeans of non-normative sexualities. It presents homosexuality and a visible assertive homosexual politics as problematic, deviant and criminal and uses the threat of the state's monopoly on coercive violence to limit the scope both for self-identification and for the emergence of a homosexual politics or group awareness. But it also codes homosexuality as confined to the domain of the private, its only legitimate visibility within the public sphere of Singaporean life being for the purpose of demonstrating state and cultural power over its regulation. As the testing officer asks the protagonist in *Peculiar Chris:* "Why tell us? Scores of homosexuals go through this period of their lives without giving the slightest clue to their orientation."[90] Of additional significance here is the fact that conscripts are required to have the form signed by a parent or guardian, thus making the disclosure of homosexuality a domestic, familial issue. This acts to bring cultural and familial pressures to bear upon the homosexual subject and contributes to the likelihood of non-disclosure of a homosexual identity and acceptance of (and even participation in) the legitimised forms of heterosexual behaviour and identity produced through national service.[91]

Interestingly, much of the regulation of homosexuality within the Singapore Armed Forces is predicated upon a linkage between homosexuality and gender role. Lim Chi-Sharn, a Singaporean who chose to disclose his homosexuality to the Singapore Armed Forces recounts being asked questions such as "Do you have anal sex? Are you active or passive?" and "Are you the man or the woman?" during his national service enlistment procedures, and his mother relates: "I gathered…that a parent was required to verify his/her son's gender status and sexual preference."[92] Here, the homosexual serviceman, often perceived by military and governmental regulators as effeminate and less than authentically masculine, disrupts the state's attempts to craft appropriate masculine subjectivities.

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[90] Lee, *Peculiar Chris*, 53.

[91] For a contemporary account of disclosing homosexuality in Singaporean National Service see: Lim Chi-Sharn, *Serving Singapore as a Gay Man: Part 1 - A Personal Experience of Disclosing Homosexuality to the Singapore Armed Forces* (Yawning Bread, September 2002, accessed 14 July 2004); available from http://www.yawningbread.org/guest_2002/guw-080.htm, Lim Chi-Sharn, *Serving Singapore as a Gay Man: Part 2 - A Personal Experience of Disclosing Homosexuality to the Singapore Armed Forces* (Yawning Bread, September 2002, accessed 14 July 2004); available from http://www.yawningbread.org/guest_2002/guw-081.htm. Recognising the power dynamic operating within the attempts to regulate homosexual identities through the military induction procedures, Lim writes: "Towards the bottom of the form, I was asked whether I had any "social problems (eg homosexuality)" which I wanted to privately inform the doctor. I ticked "yes", but wrote down: "I don't think it's a problem!""

[92] Lim Chi-Sharn, *Serving Singapore as a Gay Man: Part 1 - A Personal Experience of Disclosing Homosexuality to the Singapore Armed Forces* (accessed).

Military settings, of course, have long been central in the enforcement and reproduction of such conceptions of heteropatriarchal masculinity, and military forces have often asserted their reliance upon such masculinities for their operation and organisational cohesion.[93] Judith Butler has reflected on the tensions between the homosociability of masculine institutions such as military organisations and their prohibitions and regulations regarding both homosex and homosexual identities. Speaking of the now infamous "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy regulating (through enforced invisibility) the service of homosexuals in the United States' military, she writes that

> [t]he paradox was articulated perhaps most obviously in the claim that social cohesion in the military requires the prohibition on homosexuality, where that cohesion was then described as a magical *je ne sais quoi* that kept military men glued together. The formulation might read: *we must not have our homosexuality in order to have our homosexuality: please take it/don't take it away from us.*[94]

Once more, we see here the linkages between the individual soldier (and his gender/sexuality) and wider concerns of international security, legitimacy and prestige. By calling into question, even threatening, military cohesion, the homosexual serviceman is presented as a threat to national security. Summarising the assumptions of the military regarding homosexual servicemen, Lily Wong, the Head of the Research and Training Branch of the Singapore Armed Forces Counselling Centre has written that "it is assumed that gays would threaten discipline and morale, it is assumed that the male bonding that takes place in combat would be jeopardised if its potential for erotic contact were condoned, [and] it is believed that gays are subject to blackmail in the military context."[95] She further writes that "[i]n the SAF [Singapore Armed Forces], some homosexual servicemen may face some difficulties in adjusting to the male–dominated military environment"[96] The figure, both real and imagined, of the homosexual national serviceman thus throws into sharp relief the obsessive nature of the state's interest in appropriate gender behaviour, defined through militarism and the construction of the gendered and docile-bodied citizen-subject. To be perceived as effeminate (which immediately raises the possibility of identifiable homosexuality), within the compulsory, state-defined and pervasively masculine space of national

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[93] R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995), 73.
[94] Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 110. Original emphasis.
[95] Lily Wong, *Understanding Homosexual Servicemen: A Case Study* (Singapore Armed Forces Counselling Centre, January 2001, accessed 1 December 2002); available from http://www.mindef.gov.sg/dag/scc/pubs-CL0101-a3.html.
[96] Ibid. (accessed).

service, is to present a threat to the state's interest in structural heterosexuality to the ends not just of social/cultural reproduction but more significantly, of national defence and external legitimacy.[97]

National service is not, of course, the sole factor acting to craft forms of Singaporean masculine subjectivity. Although it does provide a telling way of excavating many of the different levels upon which Singaporean masculinities interact with, reflect and are shaped by broader international processes, it remains a singular slice of Singaporean life which needs to be supplemented with analyses of other aspects of everyday life if a truer picture of Singaporean masculinities' interrelationship with the international is to be painted. While I can only sketch out the possibilities for future explorations here, it may prove productive to identify some of the areas in which such work could be undertaken. Since the factors I discuss here work in conjunction with the compulsory nature of military training for Singapore men, they arguably act to harden masculinities even more into the internationally informed, nationally endorsed and culturally configured patterns which I have identified in my discussion of national service.

One obvious area of enquiry would be into the exclusively masculine nature of a phenomenon for which Singapore is world-renowned: judicial and educational corporal punishment. Such official disciplinary measures, aimed squarely at correcting, disciplining and creating certain forms of masculine subjectivities, remain defined in legislation and educational policy, as reserved exclusively for males.[98] Yet beyond their colonial provenance, these policies also touch on other areas of international significance. Perhaps the best-known instance of Singaporean judicial corporal punishment – the caning in 1994 of American teenager Michael Fay for graffiti vandalism – could be argued as a case of Singapore expressing its national masculinity on the world stage. The tension between Singapore needing to assert its own sovereignty through the assertion of its strict criminal laws while still needing to negotiate its international position and diplomatic

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[97] The male-dominated and masculinist space of the military is, of course, a potent site for the creation of the very male homosexualities it seeks to regulate and deny. Singapore fiction, for example, is rich with representations of the homosexual possibilities (erotic, sexual, political and homosocial) inherent in the experience of compulsory military service. See: Lee, *Peculiar Chris*, Edmund Wee, *The Narcissist* (Singapore: Times Editions, 2004), Moo, *Sisterhood: The Untold Story*, 25-33. Interestingly, the major gay and lesbian dance party, *Nation 04,* organised to coincide with the National Day celebrations in 2004 held a military-themed dance party which prompted the Singapore Armed Forces to request event organisers to alert party goers that the wearing of Singaporean public service (including military) uniforms to such an event was an offence under the Decorations and Uniforms Act and to exclude patrons wearing such uniforms. See: Gordon Fairclough, "For Its Own Reasons, Singapore Is Getting Rather Gay Friendly: Tourist Dollars Are a Part of It, but There Are Still Limits; Renaming a 'Military' Ball," *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 October 2004, *Fridae - Nation 04,* (2004, accessed 5 December 2004); available from http://www.fridae.com/nation/.

[98] See "Investigator" and Colin Farrell, *Judicial Caning in Singapore* (World Corporal Punishment Research, March 2002, accessed 14 December 2004); available from http://www.corpun.com/singfeat.htm, Mandy Ong and Hu Qing Zhan, *Life in Singapore Changi Prison: Book One* (Singapore: Pacific Distribution, 2002), 66-77, Colin Farrell, *Singapore: School Caning* (World Corporal Punishment Research, 2004, accessed 14 December 2004); available from http://www.corpun.com/sgscr1.htm.

relationship with its strongest Western ally, the United States, was played out in the negotiations for clemency to be shown to Fay (his sentence of caning remained in place but was reduced from six strokes of the *rotan* to four).[99] Yet the interconnectedness of international pressures and the socio-cultural position of corporal punishment in Singaporean society can be seen identified in additional areas. Debates over corporal punishment are common within Singaporean everyday life, and the letters and opinion pages of Singaporean newspapers often carry discussions regarding whether and in what circumstances corporal punishment might be appropriate and the ways in which it is perceived both in Singapore and internationally. For instance, much of the debate over judicial corporal punishment within Singapore turns on the ways in which the nation might be perceived internationally (and of course the economic and diplomatic consequences flowing from such perceptions) – either as an aggressive defender of a culturally relativist right to use corporal punishment or as being out of step with the morals and mores of international society. Similarly, when it comes to educational corporal punishment, recent polling by the Singapore newspapers suggests that around 70% of adult Singaporeans support the use of corporal punishment in schools.[100] Yet a recent *Straits Times* opinion piece, which drew on North American research, Swedish educational policy and even anthropological accounts of the Aka pygmies, suggested that corporal punishment acted to stifle creativity and thus created students unable to meet the challenges of employment in a knowledge-based economy and globalised economy.[101] These internationalised dimensions of Singaporean corporal punishment touch on many of the same areas which I have already discussed regarding national service: the discipline and correction of male bodies, the creation of productive subjectivities and a global assertion of sovereignty and political control.

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[99] See generally: Asad Latif, *The Flogging of Singapore: The Michael Fay Affair* (Singapore and Kuala Lumpur: Times Books International, 1994), 54-71. The then Singaporean ambassador to the United States, S R Nathan, who negotiated the terms of the clemency with then US President Bill Clinton, was subsequently elected Singaporean President. For an examination of the ways in which the Fay affair was consumed within the USA see: James R. Kincaid, *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 147-153. There are also significant resonances between this postcolonial instance of corporal punishment of a citizen of a Western power by a non-Western governmentality and the events which unfolded in colonial Bechuanaland (now Botswana) in 1933 when a British mechanic, Phinehas McIntosh, having submitted to the authority of the local Regent, Tshekedi Khama, was ordered flogged as punishment for drunk and disorderly behaviour. This impelled the Resident Commissioner of the Bechuanaland Protectorate Charles Rey, and Admiral Evans, at that time Acting High Commission at the Cape to order a military invasion of the Kalahari by the Royal Navy Marines. While Tshekedi Khama was deposed as a result of this colonial military expedition, the subsequent colonial court action against him saw both the international press and McIntosh himself take the side of Tshekedi who was reinstated to power, while the British Admiral was removed from his position. See: Michael Crowder, *The Flogging of Phinehas McIntosh: A Tale of Colonial Folly and Injustice, Bechuanaland 1933* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988).

[100] Tracy Quek, "Go Ahead, Cane Wayward Students," *The Sunday Times*, 2 May 2004.

[101] M. Nirmala, "Want Good, Creative Students? Spare the Rod," *The Straits Times*, 24 May 2004.

Such factors can also be identified in another potentially rich locus of investigation for students of masculinity and the international. Philip Holden, in his studies of post-independence leader and political patriarch, Lee Kuan Yew's understandings of colonial and postcolonial masculinity, has identified a valorisation on Lee's part of forms of British colonial masculinity and an attempt to expand their reach into Singaporean cultural life as a form of national masculinity.[102] This, he argues, has been supplemented by a selective adoption, and hybridisation, of certain aspects of Chinese diasporic masculinity, most notably through the identification of post-independence Chinese political elites with the Confucian category of *junzi*, (righteous man) linked to notions of English colonial gentlemanliness.[103] Holden writes that Lee's autobiography is representative of many forms of postcolonial nationalism "in that its stress upon disciplinary practices applied to a male body as a metaphor for nationhood is a central element in anti-colonial self-fashioning"[104] and believes that the book's thorough-going concern with "a gendered disciplinary modernity…attempts to interpellate subject-citizens of a new Singapore…[and] serves as a portable machine for the production of such national subjects."[105] Significantly, for the kinds of analyses I have advanced here, the forms of masculinity cited with admiration by Lee are often presented as created through the discipline of military service, colonial administration or strict schooling (usually complemented by the corrective effects of corporal punishment).[106] In addition, they appeal to cultural resources – a fixed historical experience of British colonialism as well as essentialised versions of the traditional cultural practices of Singapore's constituent ethnic groups – that are themselves external to Singapore itself (yet repackaged as intrinsically Singaporean) and that demonstrate the internationally referenced and multiply constituted nature of Singaporean gender roles and social configurations.[107] Returning to Chatterjee's analysis of the gendered dimensions of nationalism, it is possible to argue that, though the phenomena of national service, national education and the social and political celebration of a linked "Asian" and "colonial" masculinity, the Singaporean male is being re-formed as the appropriate subject of and for the nation, inscribed

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[102] Philip Holden, "A Man and an Island: Gender and Nation in Lee Kuan Yew's *The Singapore Story*," *Biography* 24, no. 2 (2001): 414-417.

[103] "The mapping of the Confucian junzi onto the idea of the English gentleman reads as a statement of cultural definition": Holden, *Modern Subjects/Colonial Texts*, 138. See also: Lynn Pan, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor: A History of the Chinese Diaspora* (New York and Tokyo: Kodansha Globe, 1994), 258-274.

[104] Holden, "A Man and an Island," 416.

[105] Ibid.: 402.

[106] Ibid.: 411-416, Holden, *Modern Subjects/Colonial Texts*, 137.

[107] Randolph Kluver and Ian Weber, "Patriotism and the Limits of Globalization: Renegotiating Citizenship in Singapore," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 27, no. 4 (2003): 372, Tan, ""Civic Society" And The "New Economy" In Patriarchal Singapore," 406-412, Kenneth Paul Tan, "Sexing up Singapore," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 6, no. 4 (2003): 96-97.

variously as its heroic defender, a disciplined and productive member of its workforce, trained in obedience to the central authority of the state and ready to assume the mantles of national, cultural and heteropatriarchal familial leadership. Yet these masculinities, marshalled for the purposes of and for the nation, while emerging from the patterning and conduct of Singapore everyday life, can also be read as personal, societal and national responses to broader currents of international change and as windows to a broader, more inclusive reading of the international.

THREE

GLOBAL "GIRLS"

In the previous chapter, I focussed on the relationship between international processes and the definition and nature of masculinities within contemporary Singapore. This chapter continues my engagement with Singaporean materials and examines the ways in which female subjectivities are also shaped by an encounter between international phenomena (such as flows of global capital and the circulation of forms of politics, ideologies and identities) and domestically Singaporean structures such as the state, patriarchal social and political systems and specific ethnic and cultural formations. Much of this interaction finds its expression within Singaporean everyday life, in familial responsibilities and domestic settings, in business and corporate life and in the day-to-day experience of living and working as a woman in today's Singapore. This experience of everyday life is an important site of analysis; indeed, significant intellectual work has already been undertaken on the nature and quality of Singapore women's lives within a patriarchal political and social environment. Yet comparatively little of this work has sought to broaden its frame of reference beyond Singapore, and the seemingly all-encompassing territorial, political and social purview of the postcolonial Singapore state. It is to depart from such spatially limited forms of analysis that I turn here to the female subjectivity paired with that of the male national serviceman in the Millennium Time Capsule exhibition, and a subjectivity that allows significant insights to be gleaned into the gender variables operating within the encounter between Singapore and its outside: the Singapore Girl.

The Singapore Girl – as both a brand identity and as the soubriquet for those female flight attendants who work onboard Singapore Airlines' aircraft - dates from 1972, when the then Malaysia-Singapore Airlines was split to form both the Malaysian Airline System (now Malaysia Airlines) and Singapore Airlines. From the outset, the image of Singapore Airlines was seen as intrinsically linked to the image of independent Singapore itself. As Ian Batey, the advertising executive who defined, and continues to oversee, Singapore Airlines' brand advertising, relates:

> We were repeatedly reminded that the airline had lofty global ambitions, but it represented a country which, in 1972, was seen in the West as a Third World city-state with creaky trishaws and flooded

streets rather than a place that could produce a highly competent international airline. (Traditionally, the image of a national airline is only as strong as the image of its country).[1]

It is thus perhaps indicative of the ambiguous nature of Singaporean identity and its delicate positioning between the West and the non-West that it was a British-Australian expatriate, Batey who would be responsible for the creation of the Singapore Girl, perhaps the most globally-identifiable representative not just of Singapore Airlines, but of Singapore itself. Batey realised that the experience of air-travel, in terms of schedules, safety and aircraft type was rapidly becoming homogenous. He was also, along with the Singapore Airlines executives of the time, aware that engaging the interest and patronage of travellers beyond Singapore would be crucial to the airline's survival, as all Singapore Airlines flights would necessarily be international flights, due to the tiny geographical size of Singaporean territory. Additionally, Singapore's comparatively small population size ensured a home market that, on its own, was unable to sustain the demand needed to secure the carrier's growth.[2] His firm thus set out to differentiate Singapore Airlines from other international air carriers by defining and advertising a distinctive experience of in-flight service focussing on "the onboard travel experience, the personal service and the service-related comforts."[3] Central to this campaign was the brand image – and also the on-board reality – of the Singapore Girl. Batey describes the idealised vision of the Singapore Girl as follows:

> Physically she has the attractive, natural looks of most young Asian women, and her trim figure is ideal for the distinctive *sarong kebaya* uniform. Character-wise she mirrors her Asian heritage – natural femininity, natural grace and warmth, and a natural, gentle way with people. For all of us working on the flight stewardess' persona – both the ad agency and the SIA [Singapore Airlines] marketing team – this young woman represented the essence, the soul of the airline's unique style of service, and we all got to work, enthusiastically and patiently, to build her into a very special global symbol, an icon for the airline.[4]

Certainly Batey's approach would seem to have resulted in extraordinary success, not only for Singapore Airlines (which remains one of the most profitable airlines globally) but also in terms of the international recognition of the Singapore Girl figure. Significantly, this has crossed over into global understandings and perceptions of Singapore itself. A 1998 *AsiaWeek* article praising an early board member of Singapore Airlines (who was responsible for the early expansion of the airline

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[1] Ian Batey, *Asian Branding: A Great Way to Fly* (Singapore: Prentice Hall, 2002), 118-19.
[2] Margot Sutherland and Bruce McKern, "Singapore Airlines: Global Challenges (Case IB-34)," (Stanford: Stanford Graduate School of Business, 2004), 1, Daniel Chan, "The Story of Singapore Airlines and the Singapore Girl," *Journal of Management Development* 19, no. 6 (2000): 458.
[3] Batey, *Asian Branding*, 118.
[4] Ibid.

and the hiring of Batey's advertising firm) described the company as "the city-state at cruising altitude: focussed, efficient and proud of its humble beginnings"[5] and Batey himself has written that "this is an unusual case of a national airline brand successfully helping shape the global stature of its country, rather than the reverse!"[6] A recent textbook on international business strategy delineates the linkages between the Singapore state, its People's Action Party government and Singapore Airlines as follows:

> One does not want to go beyond bounds in making analogy between the airline and the government. While the government still owns 57 per cent of the flag-carrier, it is widely believed that it does not get involved in the running of the airline. Still, the concept – notionally and strategically – offers itself without a mighty stretch: the small successful state seeking a bigger role in a globalizing world, and the small successful airline seeking the same.[7]

Internationally, Singapore Airlines and the Singapore Girl are one of the best known and best performing of all Asian brands.[8] Such is the global recognition of the Singapore Girl persona that the British choral group, The King's Singers, included an arranged version of a Singapore Airlines advertising jingle entitled "Singapore Girl" on a 1980 compact disc recording.[9] Much has also been made of the fact that to celebrate the brand's 21st anniversary in 1994, Madam Tussaud's Museum in London broke its long-standing policy of only displaying waxwork images of real celebrities and for the first time chose to display a commercial image: that of the Singapore Girl.[10] Within Singapore itself, the Singapore Girl icon has become so identified with the country as to find a place within its patriotic rituals and self-imaginings. As I discussed in the introductory comments to this part of the thesis, a female flight attendant's uniform was included in the representative icons of Singapore included in the Millennium Time Capsule project and Singapore Airlines' female flight attendants are often represented in nationalistic rituals such as the National Day Parade. Reproductions of the Singapore Airlines uniform are sold extensively in tourist gift shops across the island and the Singapore Girl was recently suggested as a tourist draw-card to be referenced in Singapore's external tourist advertising.[11]

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[5] Andrea Hamilton, "The AsiaWeek Business Hall of Fame: J.Y. Pillay - Pioneer Stock," *AsiaWeek*, 16 October 1998.

[6] Batey, *Asian Branding*, 124.

[7] Neil Holbert, "Singapore Airlines: Into Some Uncharted Regions," in *Business Strategy: An Asia-Pacific Focus*, ed. Irene Chow, et al. (Singapore and New York: Prentice Hall, 2004), 538.

[8] Martin Roll, "Singapore Airlines: Flying Tiger," http://www.brandchannel.com/features_profile.asp?pr_id=209.

[9] The King's Singers, "New Day: The King's Singers," http://www.kingssingers.com/music/recordings/rec_newday.htm.

[10] Wayne Arnold, "For the Singapore Girl, It's Her Time to Shine," *The New York Times*, 31 December 1999, Batey, *Asian Branding*, 138, Chan, "The Story of Singapore Airlines and the Singapore Girl," 456.

[11] Inviting tourists to "consume" the Singapore Girl in much the same way they would seafood or alcoholic beverages, Lim Neo Chian, the Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive of the Singapore Tourism Board has been quoted as saying

So the Singapore Girl – displayed to the outside world and globally recognised; a representative of the Singapore nation and the accomplishments of its state-owned national carrier – becomes a figure of interest to those seeking to read off the nature of Singaporean approaches to, or understandings of, the international from gendered subjectivities. What I explore here are the ways in which the Singapore Girl figure acts as a key site of subjectivity-creation, bringing together a range of gendered, nationalist, global, ethno-cultural, political and economic understandings. Why, it might be asked, has this particular image been so successful in selling Singapore and Singaporean-ness both to a global audience and also to Singaporeans themselves? What forces are at play in the dialogue (and often the disconnect) between idealised forms of nationalist femininity and those real women whose subjectivities are shaped in the encounter between the bodily, the personal and the everyday on the one hand and romanticised, state-sanctioned and internationally configured visions of feminine behaviour on the other? And given the overtly international nature of the business of a company such as Singapore Airlines, to what extent might the Singapore Girl stand as representative of Singapore women more broadly – both within Singapore and outside it?

The brand persona has certainly attracted critical scholarly attention in disciplines ranging from feminist and cultural studies through to professional management and public relations education. I draw on such studies here, alongside materials from Singapore Airlines and the everyday responses to the Singapore Girl persona by both Singaporeans and non-Singaporeans. The materials I introduce fall into two broad sections. The first examines the outward looking and explicitly internationally constituted nature of the Singapore Girl phenomenon as well as the globally circulating processes and understandings with which it intersects. The second returns to specific instances where the Singapore Girl figure resonates with domestically configured (yet internationally informed) Singaporean issues, such as motherhood, sexuality, reproduction, national defence and women's political organising. In both of these sections, I seek to open up new vistas onto the way in which the contemporary international is configured both globally and through its consumption in specifically Singaporean spaces.

"There are many simple yet unique things about Singapore. We have a range of local icons from the Singapore Chilli Crab and the Singapore Girl to the Singapore Sling cocktail and even our distinctive public housing. With the "Uniquely Singapore" brand, we want to share all these unique aspects about Singapore with the world and invite everyone to come to Singapore to experience the quintessential Singapore experience for themselves!": Singapore Tourism Board, "Singapore Launches Its New Destination Brand "Uniquely Singapore"," Singapore Tourism Board, http://app.stb.com.sg/asp/common/print.asp?id=823&type=2.

Batey Ads' 1970s guide to promoting Singapore Airlines states that 'the Singapore Girl appears in just about all media passenger advertising – sometimes as the centrepiece, sometimes as the small sign-off picture' and this formula continues to shape the airline's advertising to this day.[12] It is through such advertising that the idealised form and nature of the Singapore Girl have become apparent. According to Batey's advertising template, the Singapore Girl

> is always beautiful in her Asian way, and we try to preserve a natural warmth and charm that is an integral part of her personality. She is slightly Baptist in the type of people she mixes with – we never see her with young bucks or older men who think they're young bucks. While she's a very caring person, and laughs and smiles quite frequently, she never gets overtly familiar with passengers. Being an elegant and serene person, it's only natural that our girl is never caught in an inelegant pose.[13]

It is, of course, apparent that this is a profoundly gendered subjectivity. The brand persona exemplifies certain essentialised understandings of Asian femininity – perceived as inherent and unchanging within those Asian women from the variety of ethnicities and cultures – predominantly Chinese, Malay and Indian – that make up the women depicted in Singapore Airlines' advertising. Accordingly, it is inconceivable that the Singapore Girl could be from anything but an Asian ethnic background; nor could her qualities be captured within a masculine subjectivity.[14] Singapore Airline's advertising manager has described the connections between a seemingly pan-Asian femininity and the airline's service style in the following terms: "SIA [Singapore Airlines] is an Asian airline, and Asia has a long tradition of gentle, courteous service. The Asian woman does not feel she is demeaning herself by fulfilling the role of the gracious, charming and helpful hostess."[15] This emphasis on the so-called "natural" feminine qualities that inhere in Asian women is reflected in Singapore Airlines' advertising featuring the Singapore Girl – gentleness, serenity and a supposed distinctively Asian style of service are recurring themes. Revisiting Batey's idealised definition of the Singapore Girl that I quoted above – with its insistence on the naturalness of Asian feminine behaviour - is instructive here. Batey writes that "Character-wise she mirrors her Asian heritage – *natural* femininity, *natural* grace and warmth, and a *natural*, gentle way with people."[16]

There is an obvious intellectual incoherence to such claims and representations. They appeal to a fixed and timeless feminine essence supposedly common to Asian women. In doing so,

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[12] Batey, *Asian Branding*, 128.
[13] Ibid.
[14] The New York Times puts it thus: "Prospective stewardesses – the airline has yet to adopt the sex-neutral term flight attendant – must be younger than 26, at least 5 feet 2 inches tall, slim and attractive with a good complexion. And Asian.": Arnold, "For the Singapore Girl, It's Her Time to Shine."
[15] Harvard Business School, "Singapore Airlines (A) 9-687-022 Rev 3/89," (Harvard Business School, 1989).
[16] Batey, *Asian Branding*, 120. Emphasis added.

they accept and repackage biologically and culturally determinist understandings of feminine behaviour as well as simplistic, clichéd and reductionist notions of "Asia" and "Asianness". Yet they are not without their power. Both Batey and the Singapore Airline's executive staff have, since the 1970s, been aware of the need to engage the interest, patronage and investment of those beyond Asia. Most obviously this has manifested itself in a desire to target those passengers seeking premium service quality: regular business travellers, especially those who travel business and first class.[17] The Singapore Girl thus stands as a truly global figure and one strategically designed to promote and sell certain perceived cultural, gendered and racialised understandings to a global marketplace of potential air travellers. It is also of interest to note the ways in which Asian femininity has been utilised (and of course this resonates with the literal conscription of masculinity into Singaporean military service and national defence) in the figure of the Singapore Girl to help ensure the survival and growth of Singapore Airlines and in response to the perennial Singaporean preoccupations with the negative effects of small territory and population size. As Daniel Chan writes, the Singapore Girl branding "[c]apitalized on ideas of Oriental charm as exhibited by cabin stewardesses of various rich ethnic backgrounds. The strategy allowed SIA [Singapore Airlines] to place itself in the premium service, quality and value segment of the international airline industry,"[18]

This practise of utilising an ambiguously constituted notion of Asian-ness to meet the challenges of competing in a global marketplace dominated by Western (and Westernising) ideologies, practices and capital is not a new one. Rob Wilson has pointed to the ways in which Orientalist tropes, modes of consumption and transnational flows of peoples, ideologies, capital and commodities have come to inform the nature of what is regarded as the contemporary "Asia Pacific" – a space linking and hybridising Asia and the West.

> More than stylistic promise or commercial slogan, "Asia-Pacific" also serves as a political-economic signifier to bespeak and mediate the border-crossing expansionism – if not will to transnational community – emerging in this "borderless" region. This trope of Asia yoked to Pacific is used to mobilize the cash-driven transfusion and to drive the megatrends of *transnationalizing* economies in the region, which, without such a user-friendly geopolitical signifier, does not yet exist in anything like a coherent geopolitical or cultural framework.[19]

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[17] Sutherland and McKern, "Singapore Airlines: Global Challenges (Case IB-34)," 20.

[18] Daniel Chan, "Girl Power Boosts Singapore Airlines," *Strategic Direction* 17, no. 1 (2001): 22.

[19] Rob Wilson, "Doing Cultural Studies inside APEC: Literature, Cultural Identity and Global/Local Dynamics in the American Pacific," *Comparative Literature* 53, no. 4 (2001). Original emphasis. See also: Rob Wilson, "*Goodbye Paradise:* Global/Localism in the American Pacific," in *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, ed. Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996).

The Singapore Girl brand is both shaped by such forces and participates in repackaging, selling and exploiting them. Aihwa Ong and Rey Chow, among others, have done significant work on expanding Said's unidirectional presentation of Orientalism to one that encompasses awareness of the fact that "Orientals" themselves often play a part in the definition, construction and deployment of Orientalist stereotypes and understandings. This self-Orientalism most commonly emerges in two scenarios: firstly where cultural self-definition in the wake of colonialism involves state-based reification of perceived essential Eastern qualities as a means of resisting Western cultural hegemony, and secondly as a means of attracting that Western and transnational capital still controlled and directed by the colonialist or metropolitan gaze.[20] As Andrew Grossman writes, such analyses hold out alternative ways of reading the phenomenon of self-Orientalism "as a sort of "genuine" superficiality, as a semi-deliberate parody of the Western gaze, an "oriental's orientalism" that tries to juggle self-identity and national identity in a post-imperialist, poker-faced struggle to go beyond the two."[21]

Certainly, in presenting a figure such as the Singapore Girl in their advertising, the management of Singapore Airlines have demonstrated a keen awareness not just of the Orientalist perceptions which continue to mediate flows of global capitalism (and business travellers' choice of airlines) but also of the need to construct Orientalist images that engage the hybrid and transnationally constituted nature of that space called "Asia". This is most clearly apparent in their choice of Batey, a male Caucasian expatriate, arguably the very kind of person to which Singapore Airlines' advertising was most meant to appeal, to oversee the airline's branding and promotional strategies. But the transnational and Orientalist processes informing Batey's creation of the Singapore Girl operate on many other levels. The famous *sarong kebaya* uniform, for instance, is in fact a Westernised version of the Malay ethnic dress, designed by French *couturier* Pierre Balmain. The uniform - "each tailored to fit so closely they have been known to split open during flights"[22] - was described in a recent report in Singapore's *Straits Times* newspaper as reflecting "Asian grace and Western modernity."[23] In their recruitment of female flight attendants, the airline has also

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[20] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).. For the critique of Orientalism see: Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 1-54, Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 55-83.

[21] Andrew Grossman, "Better Beauty through Technology: Chinese Transnational Feminism and the Cinema of Suffering," http://www.brightlightsfilm.com/35/chinesefeminism1.html.

[22] Arnold, "For the Singapore Girl, It's Her Time to Shine."

[23] Ginnie Teo, "Fresh Parade," *The Straits Times*, 30 April 2004. For a fascinating account of the ways in which fashion codes in contemporary Singapore can be used as a starting point in studying broader processes of globalization and its effects on social change see: Chua Beng-Huat, "Postcolonial Sites, Global Flows and Fashion Codes: A Case-Study of

shown itself to be an adept manager of this process of strategic self-Orientalism. Senior executive vice-president of Singapore Airlines, Michael Tan, describing the links between greater globalisation and transnationalism and the evolving image of the Singapore Girl has stated:

> Customers are well-travelled, they know what they like. They know their wines, they know their food. They are very versatile people.…In response to the changes we have seen in our customers, the Singapore Airlines Girl, our cabin crew image, has evolved. She is still very young and caring, and she still possesses that mystical personality that we are able to capture in our advertising strategy, but we are now looking for a person who can easily mix with different cultures, different age groups, and a person who is well traveled and experienced. That is the SIA [Singapore Airlines] girl. But, deep in her, the service style, the caring personality, remain intact.[24]

There is a certain pragmatism apparent in both the deployment of the hybrid and transnationalised cultural aspects of Asian femininity inherent in a figure such as the Singapore Girl in order to attract global attention and business, and the Singapore Government's selective utilisation of ideologies drawn from cultural sources (most obviously Confucianism and British colonialism) to construct notions of Asian or nationally shared values in order to ensure national stability, economic growth and international legitimacy and distinctiveness.[25] Heng and Devan, in their discussion of Singaporean government efforts to direct Chinese economic, social and political dominance in Singapore, have argued that "[i]nternalized Orientalism allows the definition of an idealized Chineseness fully consonant with the requirements of a modern market economy, and supplies the mechanism of justification by which qualities deemed undesirable…may be contained or excised."[26] Bringing a gendered analysis to bear on such processes, Ling has written that Asian femininity, and the ways in which it is portrayed both domestically and internationally, is subjected in and for late-modern capitalism; equated "with service to family, state and economy in "miracle" East Asia, and, by extension, to the hypermasculine global economy."[27]

Thus, the patriotically and commercially configured image of the Singapore Girl, constituted and consumed within such an ambiguous process of national, commercial and cultural self-feminisation, renders legible a key aspect of the postcolonial Southeast Asian state's response

Power *Cheongsams and Other Clothing Styles in Modern Singapore," Postcolonial Studies: Culture, Politics, Economy* 3, no. 3 (2000).

[24] Sutherland and McKern, "Singapore Airlines: Global Challenges (Case IB-34)," 21.

[25] See further: Michael Hill, "'Asian Values' as Reverse Orientalism: Singapore," *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 41, no. 2 (2000). For more on 'shared values' see: Jon S. T. Quah, ed., *In Search of Singapore's National Values* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1990).

[26] Geraldine Heng and Janadas Devan, "State Fatherhood: The Politics of Nationalism, Sexuality and Race in Singapore," in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, ed. Andrew Parker, et al. (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 355.

[27] L. H. M. Ling, *Postcolonial International Relations: Conquest and Desire between Asia and the West* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 145-46.

to the need to court flows of global capital. While the profitability, international reputation and modernist rationality of the Singapore state - and of the airline which carries both its flag and its name - could well be coded as intrinsically masculine in nature (most obviously in their trenchant assertion of Singaporean sovereignty to the global political and economic order), this has, to a large extent, been established through shrewdly managed processes of self-feminisation and the use of Orientalist imagery and representations.[28] On this point, Tom O'Regan has argued that critical readings of transcultural relations by Western scholars need to guard against a tendency to figure

> any Asian repetition and cooption of Western Orientalist stereotypes…such as [the] Singapore Girl…as simply understandable and therefore unavailable to sustained critique.…[I]f some Asian agency is recognised it becomes necessary to engage with and thoroughly understand why East and South-East Asian government not only challenge their own orientalism but also busily self-orientalise themselves in their internal cultural politics and their international relations.[29]

Yet in my reading, the question implicit in O'Regan's analysis is central: if some Asian agency is to be recognised, who is able to exercise such agency and on what terms? Here, the gendered dimensions of power operating within the seemingly paradoxical masculinisation of Orientalism are revealed in the fact that those directing and guiding the definition and use of such gendered representations are overwhelmingly, if not entirely, male. In both governmental and corporate circles, masculine dominance is well entrenched: in 2003 there was not a single woman represented among Singapore's Cabinet Ministers or on the Board of Directors of Singapore Airlines.[30]

The patriarchal power relations operating behind the Orientalist and essentialist state/corporate deployment of the Singapore Girl image, and even the male dominance of those global business elites whose interest it is designed to pique, links out to another aspect of the brand persona that has attracted significant intellectual, as well as activist, interest. Rana Kabbani has written of the colonising West's "insistent claim that the East was a place of lascivious sensuality"[31] and it is not difficult to identify the sexualised elements at play in the ways in which the Singapore Girl figure is presented and consumed in contemporary times. The first Singapore Girl advertising

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[28] Interestingly too, the comments by the creator of the Singapore Girl brand image, Ian Batey, can be read as a similar act of self-positioning, utilising the viewpoints and arguments of an assertive, Occidentalising Orient, alongside classically Orientalist tropes, to successfully sell commercial products into a transcultural, globalised marketplace dominated by Western capital.

[29] Tom O'Regan, "Introducing Critical Multiculturalism," http://wwwmcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/8.2/IntroCM.html.. In the same issue of *Continuum* see also: Stephen Frost, "Broinowski versus Passmore: A Dialogue of Our Times," http://wwwmcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/8.2/Frost.html.

[30] Singapore Airlines, "Annual Report 03/04," (Singapore: Singapore Airlines, 2004), 4-5, Tan Tarn How and Neo Hui Min, " Where Are You, Madam Minister?," *The Straits Times*, 8 March 2003.

[31] Rana Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myths of Orient*, 2nd ed. (London: Pandora, 1994), 6.

debuted in 1972 with a soft-focus, close up image of a female flight attendant's face captioned with the text "This Girl's in Love With You".[32] More recently, a report from the *AsiaWeek* magazine used the metaphor of treatment for erectile impotence to describe the ways in which the Singapore Girl has been understood by male business travellers: "Remember Singapore Girl?…With her attentive ways and her ice-melting smile, she always seemed to half-promise something more than just another plane journey. For male business travellers, she was the Viagra of the 1980s."[33] This presentation of the possibility of sexual adventure, and of female sexual availability, form part of the essentialised, Orientalist understandings of Asian femininity that help constitute the brand identity of the Singapore Girl, and the ways in which it has been, and continues to be consumed. The airline's promotional tagline "Singapore Girl, You're a Great Way to Fly" and its advertising copy reinforce (while never making explicit) the Orientalist and sexualised nature of the Singapore Girl. To give but one example of the ways in which Singapore Airlines advertising deploys such stereotypes, the promotional jingle re-recorded and arranged by the King's Singers[34] contains the following extraordinary lyrics:

> *First time I saw you | Singapore Girl*
> *Your smile welcomed me | With a glimpse of Shangri-la*
> *I'll find no rest | Unless, I can be where you are…*
> *Singapore Girl | Beauty the West has never known*
> *…*
> *Next time I see you | Singapore Girl*
> *Tell me with your eyes | Will I reach my Shangri-la?*
> *I'll find no rest | Unless, I can be where you are…*
> *Singapore Girl | Beauty the West will never know.*[35]

The song's lyrics while addressed to the Singapore Girl are, of course, designed to be decoded and understood within Western metropolitan and Orientalist cultures. Even the vision of Shangri-La contained in the song references a series of often amorphous yet globalised, understandings available to the contemporary business traveller: the worldwide resonances of James Hilton's 1933 fictional depiction of Shangri-La, a Christian-Buddhist utopia hidden in the Himalayas; their mapping onto the modern space of Singapore Airlines' aircraft and into the self-Orientalising references of the tourist promotion of the country of Singapore itself; the sexualising

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[32] Batey, *Asian Branding*, plate facing 138.
[33] Hamilton, "The AsiaWeek Business Hall of Fame: J.Y. Pillay - Pioneer Stock."
[34] Like the Singapore Girl figure itself, this jingle was originally authored by a male Australian: songwriter Patrick Aulton. "Pat Aulton," http://www.milesago.com/industry/aulton-pat.htm, Batey, *Asian Branding*, 120. Aulton was also the composer of the famous *It's Time* Australian Labor Party campaign song from the 1972 Australian general election.
[35] My own transcription. See: The King's Singers, "New Day: The King's Singers."

of the bodies of individual female flight attendants and even the promise of pampering and care held out by a chain of luxury hotels and resorts that trades globally under the name of Shangri-La (the first Shangri-La Hotel opened in Singapore in 1971, one year prior to Singapore Airlines commencing operations).[36] For potential air travellers, the paradisiacal promise of such a multiply and transnationally/transculturally constituted Shangri-La is contained in the glance and smile of the Singapore Girl, that representative of an unknown and unknowable Oriental beauty. The advertising jingle presents a repeated description of heteropatriarchal desire ("I'll find no rest | Unless I can be where you are…") and the quest for its fulfilment ("Will I reach my Shangri-La?"). And while the Singapore Girl is presented as alluring and mystically erotic, the jingle holds out the possibility of her possession ("Next time I see you"): all one needs do is book a flight on a Singapore Airlines service.

The Singaporean social commentator Geraldine Heng has explicitly linked such sexual promises, encoded in Singapore Airlines' advertising and the presentation of its flight attendants, to the aspirations and business accomplishments of both the company and the Singapore state, writing that "Singapore…has exploited a sexualized Asian femininity to sell the services of its national air carrier…with incomparably spectacular commercial success."[37] While much of the academic interest that has been paid to this phenomenon has (understandably) come from within cultural and tourism studies, it is also of significance that sexualised depictions of Asian femininity have attracted the interest of scholars of international relations. Early work in feminist international relations, most notably Cynthia Enloe's pioneering *Bananas, Beaches and Bases,* examined the ways in which Asian women's sexuality has been packaged and consumed internationally, and later work has related Enloe's insights specifically to brand images such as that of the Singapore Girl. Pettman, for instance, argues that "Asian women's sexuality is being packaged and sold internationally, coming to stand for service, sex and essential and non threatening femininity. Media images, travel brochures, the "Singapore girl" are used to sell Asia as a tourist destination, out there, unspoiled, for the taking."[38] Similarly, Vera Mackie has used her discussion of the interaction between

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[36] For the original myth of Shangri-La see: James Hilton, *Lost Horizon* (London: Macmillan, 1933). On Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts see: "About Shangri-La," Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts, http://www.shangri-la.com/aboutus/company/en/index.aspx.

[37] Geraldine Heng, "'A Great Way to Fly': Nationalism, the State and the Varieties of Third-World Feminism," in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, ed. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 38.

[38] Jindy Jan Pettman, "Worlding Women," Victoria University, http://www.vuw.ac.nz/pols/Journals/Antepodium/articles/pettmanj-1995.aspx. See also: Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

postcolonial nations' processes of self-representation and the colonial and metropolitan gaze which they both create and exploit to argue that "[t]he construction of exoticised desires…is an integral part of relationships between nations, suggesting that the burgeoning field of "gender and international relations" needs to be supplemented with a more systematic analysis of "sexuality and international relations"".[39]

One way of carrying such readings of gender, sexuality and international relations forward is to examine the ways in which the Singapore Girl figure acts to shape and inform actual gendered subjectivities at both the individual and societal level. Working in this way helps to broaden out the existing base of understandings that underpin scholarly work on the ways in which postcolonial nationalism acts to circumscribe and define women's identities and social roles. In a sense, much of my work here must necessarily be speculative. In the absence of major sociological or ethnographic studies regarding the ways in which the Singapore Girl figure is consumed, debated or utilised, both within Singapore and internationally, we must rather turn to primary source materials, reflections (as it were) of the impact the brand image has had; the social phenomena it informs and for which it acts as a signpost. Nonetheless, enough material does exist on the relationships between Singapore femininities and the gender constructions that coalesce around the Singapore Girl figure to enable one to present a selective, and by no means exhaustive, series of snapshots of Singapore women's everyday lives and they ways in which they connect out to broader international processes.

Commonly, gender analyses of contemporary Singapore have pointed to the state's involvement in the regulation of women's bodies to ensure the continual supply of new citizens for the nation (primarily through eugenically informed pro-natalist policies) and in the maintenance of certain spaces and national duties as feminine. Typical of such analyses is Heng and Devan's much anthologized study of state fatherhood in Singapore, in which they argue that, in the process of Singaporean post-independence nation-building, a

> sexualized, separate species of nationalism…was being advocated for women: as patriotic duty for
> men grew out of the barrel of a gun (phallic nationalism, the wielding of a surrogate technology of

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[39] Vera Mackie, "The Metropolitan Gaze: Travellers Bodies and Spaces," http://wwwsshe.murdoch.edu.au/intersections/issue4/vera.html.

the body in national defense), so it would grow, for women, out of the recesses of the womb (uterine nationalism, the body *as* a technology of defense wielded by the nation).[40]

It seems to me, though, that such analyses, while apt, need to be paired with studies of the ways in which Singaporean nationalism is far more ambiguously constituted than state-sanctioned versions would concede; defined with reference to the nation's outside – both regionally and globally but also temporally, in dialogue with colonial pasts. And while scholarly analyses to date have been highly successful at pointing to the ways in which the Singapore state has regulated and intervened in the lives of its female citizens, they also need to be supplemented with a broader examination of how structures either beyond the state or subordinate to it – such as flows of globalization and the patternings of everyday life in areas such as employment and commerce, the family and cultural relations – supplement or resist such state interventions, or recast them in alternate registers. Examining the ways in which the identities, bodies, workplaces and even home lives of Singapore Airlines' female flight attendants are constituted, policed and consumed, both with reference to the nationally/transnationally informed Singapore Girl image as well as in ways common to all Singaporean women, can shed light on the nature of Singaporean interactions with the international and the way globalization's effects are variously embraced, regulated and resisted. Unpacking the ways in which the Singapore Girl image is utilised and consumed in different socio–political circumstances can tell us much about the nature and reach of the contemporary international.

It is axiomatic to state that the Singapore Girl image does not function merely as a commercial brand image but acts to project a series of meanings onto the bodies of individual women, defining and reshaping physical appearance, demeanour and behaviour. In a recent feature article for *USA Today*, an American journalist utilised language more often used to describe military training when describing Singapore Airlines' induction programme for new female flight attendants. She wrote: "Basic training for a Singapore Girl lasts four months – among the longest of any airline in the industry.…[T]he bulk of training goes to molding fresh recruits into service-minded stewardesses."[41] Her report shed further light on this process:

> Over a two-day period recently, 450 young hopefuls stream into Singapore Airlines' sprawling training center near the city's Changi Airport…First stop: The scale for a height and weight check.

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[40] Heng and Devan, "State Fatherhood," 348-49. Original emphasis.
[41] Jayne Clark, "They Enjoy Being A "Girl"," *USA Today*, 8 November 2002, 1D. Another report describes the training process as "debutante boot camp": Arnold, "For the Singapore Girl, It's Her Time to Shine."

(Although there are no specified weight limits, figures that aren't flattered by the sarong kebaya uniform won't be hired.)…[O]nly 10% will make the cut. After all, not everyone is icon material.[42]

The military terminology is apt. Since the service provided by female flight attendants is of such central importance to the company, and figures so strongly in its international advertising, the women passing through the airline's training programme are selected and judged on their ability to "measure up" to the idealised specifications of the Singapore Girl. These specifications are of course designed to engage the interest and approval of international air travellers – both those who choose to fly with Singapore Airlines and that broader group who make up the intended targets of the airline's advertising. In a manner not dissimilar to the construction of masculine subjectivities through military training discussed in the previous chapter, here it is possible to see how the definition and nature of *the* Singapore Girl (the idealised brand image) carries over into the education and certification of a particular woman as *a* Singapore Girl. Margaret Tan, a former flight attendant for Singapore Airlines has stated that "[b]ehind the beautiful images of the Singapore girl was a very disciplined, very manufactured system of reward and punishment".[43] Other female workers for the company recall the policies of oversight and regulation that governed the appearance of a "Singapore Girl" both while she was working and when off-duty:

S., who flew with SIA [Singapore Airlines] from 1990 to 1995 said the airline is strict about appearances. …The girls had to paint their nails only in chilli or tomato reds. Pinks were not allowed and if you dared flaunt such a shade, you risked a talking to from your supervisor. Even if you wore stockings, your toe nails also had to be varnished, and in the approved colours. She recalled "spot checks" when a supervisor would call up a girl at the end of a flight and tell her that she was putting on too much weight, or that she should take better care of her skin.…Lips must be in red hues while eye shadow must match the colour of the sarong kebaya.…She recalled how a tomboyish colleague had on very little makeup during one flight. The supervisor was so disturbed by this that he insisted she piled on more.…She was also informed that, when she was in uniform and in public, a Singapore Girl should not be seen chewing gum.[44]

These processes of self-regulation are instigated and enforced by Singapore Airlines in its training, employment and operational procedures. This is obviously driven by commercial imperatives and a desire to for individual flight attendants to match, as closely as possible, the idealised images portrayed in the company's brand advertising. Indeed, speaking of the Singapore Girl branding campaign, Ian Batey has insisted that "[a]ll the stewardesses you see in the [advertising] productions are genuine SIA [Singapore Airlines] flight stewardesses at the time they

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[42] Clark, "They Enjoy Being A "Girl"," 1D.
[43] Li Xueying, "What It Means to Be a S'pore Woman," *The Straits Times*, 6 June 2003.
[44] Sumiko Tan, "Don't Let Your Hair Down Too Much," *Straits Times*, 9 January 2000, 4.

are filmed. This policy of using only authentic cabin crew has been followed religiously since SIA took to the skies."[45] Yet the nationalistically endorsed and internationally configured identity of a Singapore Airlines female flight attendant ensures that she is bodily subject to far more powerful and less easily identifiable coercive forces than those simply deriving from the context of her employment. As both nationalist icon and international symbol of service and Oriental charm, these women live and work within national spaces and a transnational service industry that exert powerful forces of monitoring and control over their expected behaviour and appearance. For instance, the quotation above, regarding the airline's control over the physical appearance and behaviour of its female in-flight crew is derived not from a source critical of the airline's policy, but from a Singaporean newspaper article, headlined "Don't Let Your Hair Down Too Much" expressing concern that Singapore Airlines' decision to take a 49% shareholding in the British air carrier Virgin Atlantic might "dilute the Singapore Girl's image of being meticulously groomed."[46] In a redeployment of familiar Singaporean governmental concerns about possible negative impacts of economic and cultural globalization, the article links Singaporean shareholding in a British air carrier established by flamboyant British businessman Richard Branson with possible corrosive effects on the essentialist visions of Asian femininity referenced in and by the Singapore Girl. Its author, journalist Sumiko Tan, explicitly draws linkages between flight attendants' personal appearance, perceived femininity and sexual attractiveness and an assertion of Singaporean patriotism. Addressing her Singaporean readers, who become co-opted in her glowing appreciation of Singapore Airlines' female flight attendants, she writes:

> Ah, the Singapore Girl. I don't know about you, but what makes Singapore Airlines my airline of choice has as much to do with patriotic pride as with the Singapore Girl. I've yet to come across – either on a plane or while waiting in airports -any stewardess who is as well-packaged, poised and, oh yes, sexy as the Singapore Girl. From the curve of her waist and hips in that snug sarong kebaya to her tiny, crimson-painted toe nails peeking out from her batik sandals, and from the shine and swing of her shampooed hair to her just-right makeup, she is a vision of feminine allure.[47]

It is also of interest that Tan's article makes a point of mentioning the restrictions on an employee's use of gum, referencing yet another national policy (the restrictions on the sale and importation of chewing gum in Singapore which are of course easily circumvented by an international flight attendant) that has long been regarded as symbolic of the micro-managerial

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[45] Batey, *Asian Branding*, 121.
[46] Tan, "Don't Let Your Hair Down Too Much," 4.
[47] Ibid.

political and social control of the People's Action Party government both within Singapore and in broader international contexts. The oversight of female flight attendants' behaviour is also apparent in a Singaporean resident's decision to write in to the letters pages of the *Straits Times* that he had been "taken aback by the sight of a Singapore Girl puffing away on a cigarette" at the city's international Changi Airport. He went on to assert that "[When a stewardess] is wearing her SIA uniform, she is projecting her company and the nation's image, and not just her own. I hope the management will look into the matter."[48] The patriotically configured understandings of the Singapore Girl, it seems, do not allow for any breach of national policy or damage to national standing by those individual women who work as flight crew for Singapore Airlines.

Yet the regulation and enforcement of the Singapore Girl ideal occurs in spaces well beyond Singapore – and perhaps this may tell us something of the ambiguous and transcultural mix of ingredients which go into the recipe of Singapore nationalism. So globally recognizable is the brand image of the Singapore Girl – and so clearly understood and enthusiastically consumed around the world are the range of meanings that it acts to write on the bodies of individual female flight attendants – that individuals, corporations and global flows from well beyond Singapore act to enforce and reinforce such women's compliance with the Orientalist, sexualised and essentialist meanings deployed in Singapore Airlines' advertising. Product reviews of Singapore Airlines' services in newspapers and magazines around the world, regularly attest to the global reach and intercultural penetration of the Singapore Girl image. These form part of a globalized series of understandings both of Singaporean femininity and of the service that can be anticipated on a Singapore Airlines flight. This discursive (and coercive) consumption of the Orientalist constructions of the female flight attendant's brand persona can be seen in a recent article entitled "The Sublime Spirit of the Singapore Girl" by American travel writer Laurel Lehrer:

> There she stood, the personification of loveliness, in the doorway of the first-class cabin of Singapore Airlines. She epitomized the famed Singapore Girl – personable, polite and pretty….While nestling in my seat [sic], my soft-spoken Singapore girl graciously offered a dish of heated cashews and almonds along with a cool drink. Before long, she slipped slowly down the aisle in her open-back sandals that matched her attractively form-fitted Malaysian-style outfit….Meals were served by my mild-mannered Singapore girl. Sincere in her desire to render the ultimate in service, she seemed to anticipate my every need.[49]

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[48] Lau Chun Hwee, "SIA Girl Should Not Smoke in Uniform," *The Straits Times*, 10 April 2001.
[49] Laurel F Lehrer, "The Sublime Spirit of the Singapore Girl," *USA Today Magazine*, 1 July 1995, 54-55.. Lehrer's extraordinary review of Singapore Airlines' first class service contains repeated possessive references to "my" Singapore Girl along with descriptions of her as "gracious" and "soft-spoken/mild-mannered", even at one point as "magical".

Elsewhere, Western journalists, generally uncritical consumers of the sexualised and Orientalist brand designs offered up by the airline, have written of how Singapore Airlines flights afford "an opportunity to mix with the endlessly alluring (to male passengers at least) batik-clad "Singapore girl" flight attendants, whom no one calls "Singapore women""",[50] of how the Singapore Girl "keeps male business executives and potential investors happy at the expensive end of SIA's [Singapore Airlines'] planes"[51] and even of the fact that "SIA's cabin crew training facility is known as the "Asian Babe Factory"."[52] One article has even described the Singapore Girl as "a winged geisha, a tea-party animal, a pretty young thing in a form-fitting sarong."[53] Reflecting on the impact that this sexualised and Orientalist imagery, so readily circulating among global business and leisure travellers, has on the lives of those women who work on board Singapore Airlines aircraft, Geraldine Heng has written:

> That the image of the Singapore woman which the airline and the state sell on the air services market is a sexual one is readily attested to. Singapore courts recently tried a rash of sexual-molestation cases, where male air passengers of varied descriptions, races, and national origins had apparently found it impossible to resist fondling or otherwise sexually handling stewardesses on SIA [Singapore Airlines] flights.[54]

The processes of surveillance and control over the Singapore Girl image continue, and perhaps intensify, in cyberspace, where business travellers, tourists and aviation enthusiasts regularly discuss individual flight attendants' performance with reference to the Singapore Girl ideal in discussion forums and in flight and product reviews. These documents demonstrate the ways in which the Singapore Girl brand persona is consumed outside of Singapore, the extent to which travellers feel entitled to a form of service equal to that they have been sold in the airline's advertising, as well as the ways in which they monitor and insist on individual Singapore Airlines' female flight attendants performance of the Singapore Girl ideal. A recent example is from the *Flyertalk* website, where a British teenager (of Vietnamese background) submitted a nearly 16, 000 word report on his experiences as an economy class passenger on Singapore Airlines flights between London and Saigon, via Singapore.[55] As well as identifying individual flight attendants, he documents their physical appearance, facial makeup, dress, pronunciation of English and

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[50] Alex Beam, "The Contentedness of the Long-Distance Flier," *Boston Globe*, 2 May 2004.
[51] Eric Ellis, "SIA Chief Cheong Struts His Stuff - Life Sometimes Imitates Art," *The Australian*, 25 June 2001.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Clark, "They Enjoy Being A "Girl"."
[54] Heng, "'A Great Way to Fly'," 38.
[55] I am grateful to Fauzi Ahmad for drawing this document to my attention.

demeanour, describing one female flight attendant in the following terms: "She was medium in height, had brown hair, wore glasses, nice legs, attractive as a whole and would make a good wife."[56] His report also describes how he engineered various scenarios during his flights to test the female flight attendants' adherence to the Singapore Girl ideal. These included contriving for his blanket to fall to the aircraft cabin floor while he pretended to sleep, to test whether or not the flight attendants would (in a repetition of a common image from Singapore Airlines' own advertising) re-drape the blanket over his body. His report also criticised certain flight attendants for failing to say "thank you" to each and every passenger while collecting their used hot towels or for failing to smile at passengers when delivering beverages. He also informed the flight attendants on his flights that he had monitored their performance and that his report would be forwarded to the airline management.

These brief sketches demonstrate the strong domestic and international pressures that operate to enforce the purity and consistency of the Singapore Girl persona. And it is in these processes that significant overlap can be identified between the Singapore Girl phenomenon and the position and oversight of women more generally within Singapore– and the way that Singaporean femininities are configured largely with respect to external, transnational or global forces, mediated extensively, though not exclusively, through the structures of post-independence Singapore state, economy and society. Former Singapore Airlines flight attendant, Margaret Tan, has drawn parallels between the national and corporate construction and enforcement of the Singapore Girl identity and issues effecting Singapore women more broadly, arguing that "all women in the country undergo society's "systematic training" to fit a prescribed role."[57] The Singapore Girl, as a figure of patriotic femininity constituted in and by the nation and deployed in its service, thus resonates with many of the other areas in which the postcolonial state, its nationalist imaginings and external relations become imbricated with femininities and the everyday life of women.

Writing of just such processes, scholars from the Singaporean women's group, the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE) have identified what they term three paradoxes confronting working women in contemporary Singapore: the competing demands of supplying the economy both with labour through paid employment and future generations of

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[56] "Singapore_Air", "Singapore Airlines/Vietnam Airlines: LHR - SIN - UIH - SGN - SIN - LHR," http://www.flyertalk.com/forum/showthread.php?t=181980.
[57] Li Xueying, "What It Means to Be a S'pore Woman."

workers through biological reproduction; the tensions between meeting familial responsibilities regarding nurture and domestic labour in the home and providing enhanced familial income in a late capitalist consumer society; and the disjuncture between assuming greater managerial and decision making roles in employment and societal expectations of appropriately feminine behaviour.[58] This tension between economic and biological productivity and between societally/nationally endorsed feminine behaviour and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and employment is of course informed both by domestic Singaporean factors such as state policies, workplace relations and social and cultural environments and by external phenomena such as international economics, globally circulating subjectivities and politics and transcultural relations. It makes sense, therefore, to examine a number of the areas affecting Singapore women, to examine how in each of these cases, the Singapore Girl brand image – as well as the reality of those women employed to represent it – represents a negotiation or a crossing-point between internal Singapore factors and those deriving from beyond the nation. In doing so, it is possible to detect the outlines of a mode of understanding the international which sees the postcolonial woman and her gender identity as a fundamental interface between the nation and its outside.

Most important here are the ways in which a docile, economically productive femininity is figured as being of critical importance to the Singapore state with regard to protecting its international reputation and global economic standing. It is easy to see the economic significance of a national air carrier for the Singapore state. But it is equally important to recognize the ways in which state, society and the international community perceive the service provided by Singapore Airline's female flight attendants (and their adherence to the idealized specifications of the Singapore Girl persona) as linked to the airline's commercial success and international reputation. Political patriarch Lee Kuan Yew, a staunch defender of Singapore Airlines' role in attracting global capital and transnational business to Singapore, has spoken of how the city-state is on show from the minute a business traveller boards an Singapore Airlines flight and that this national performance is carried through from the inflight experience, to the business person's arrival at Changi airport, his (far less commonly, her) limousine ride to the city along broad smooth-flowing freeways to a luxury hotel or richly appointed executive boardroom.[59] The role and importance of

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[58] Jean Lee, Kathleen Campbell, and Audrey Chia, *The Three Paradoxes: Working Women in Singapore* (Singapore: Association of Women for Action and Research, 1999). See also: Phyllis Ghim-Lian Chew, *Women, Work and Family: The Challenges of a Working Woman* (Singapore: Association of Women for Action and Research, 1998).
[59] Ellis, "SIA Chief Cheong Struts His Stuff." Lee's views are given a more critical reading by Tan: "Consider how the visitor's vision is channeled in Singapore upon landing in Changi airport. The interior of the world's 'best airport' is high-

the Singapore Girl figure in this national project of seducing transnational capital cannot be understated. A *New York Times* report in 1999 described the "seductively prim" Singapore Girl as "the primary reason her employer has vaulted to the forefront of the global aviation industry"[60] and the editor of Singapore's *Straits Times* newspaper has cautioned younger Singaporeans against criticising the Singapore Girl figure on (what he presents as "in-vogue") feminist grounds for fear of eroding Singapore Airlines' – and the nation's - competitive advantage globally.[61] An analyst for the firm Merrill Lynch makes same point, if in a more sardonic key, arguing that "the Singapore Girl thing is not strictly PC [politically correct] these days…it's just very successful."[62]

Productive labour in employment as well as in domestic settings has long been figured as a key site requiring intervention and control by the postcolonial state and one whose importance has grown in an era of global economics and late capitalism. Chandra Talpade Mohanty has explored the sexual politics of global capitalism, arguing that late capitalism is predicated upon certain gendered understandings regarding work, employment and citizenship while simultaneously feeding such understandings of gender back into processes of subjectivity creation and definition.[63] The globalizing imperatives, which act to shape the possibilities of women's work and women's lives are of course clearly apparent in the case of women's employment as Singapore Airlines flight attendants. As we have already seen, such employment renders women subject to national and global forms of oversight in areas such as appearance and behaviour, and makes them participant-

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ceilinged and landscaped with orchids and decorative plants, complete with fountains and aquariums; creating the effect of being in an extremely large hotel lobby. The taxi ride to a downtown hotel is filled with visual feasts; generous plantings of year-round flowering orchids and bougainvilleas on the roadside and dividers escort the visitor to tree-lined boulevards of rain trees and flame trees known for their dramatic broad canopies, through their canopies one glimpses some high-end housing projects built by the government. But the piece de resistance is the East Coast Parkway expressway, the main thoroughfare that connects the city center to the airport; to one's left one sees people enjoying the sun and the sand on the reclaimed beaches with their imported sand, while the right is flanked by dramatic luxurious private condominium developments. As the expressway rises and curves for the final time to become the Benjamin Sheares Bridge, one breaks free from the tree cover for a short but dramatic vista of the harbor and the rugged Singapore skyline seen from a height of approximately ten storeys above sea-level before the road curves again to lead into the city, passing through luxury hotels and malls along the way. This 'birdseye' view of the city is constantly replayed for the populace through TV specials and shorts to evoke the desired patriotic feeling, serving as a visual reminder of the nation/government's success.": Stephen Yunn Gwang Tan, "Engineering a Nation: Fascist Vision after WWII," School of Communication, Simon Fraser University, http://www.sfu.ca/~stana/files/papers/fascist.pdf.
 It is worth noting the part that Singapore Airlines plays in this scripted nationalist vision, as this report from a 17yo British tourist transiting Singapore Airport on a Singapore Airlines flight and taking a free tour of the island between his flights, demonstrates: "[W]e set off down the East Coast Road…it was lovely and smooth with flowers down the middle.…Extremely stylish apartment buildings all around on my right and on the left the water. As we drove along, we passed some bridge and we could see Singapore's financial centre.…I saw the proud and tall blue Singapore Airlines building! That was a moment to savour. The building stands tall against the Singapore backdrop – the pinnacle of Singapore!": "Singapore_Air", "Singapore Airlines/Vietnam Airlines: LHR - SIN - UIH - SGN - SIN - LHR."
[60] Arnold, "For the Singapore Girl, It's Her Time to Shine."
[61] Reported in Heng, "'A Great Way to Fly'," 39.
[62] Wendy Wong, cited in Arnold, "For the Singapore Girl, It's Her Time to Shine."
[63] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts: Ideologies of Domination, Common Interests, and the Politics of Solidarity," in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, ed. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Thinking Gender (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 5.

subjects in the creation, maintenance and performance of a series of globally and nationally sexualised and racialised meanings tied to feminine subjectivity. But the phenomenon also illuminates a number of issues regarding cultural, state and global interventions into the nature, conduct and possibilities of women's work. The position of the Singapore Girl as representative of a patriotic version of essential pan-Asian femininity configured explicitly to ensure that the masculinist postcolonial state and its corporate subsidiaries achieve economic success, strategic outcomes and global prestige acts to connect individual women's gender performances with exigencies and concerns fundamentally outside the direct control, if not the interest, of the state. Key to understanding this process is an analysis of the patriarchal and familial metaphors that undergird Singapore society. As Lenore Lyons puts it: "[d]iscussions of nation-building in Singapore are replete with references to the family of the nation – we hear about "founding fathers", "state fatherhood", the "nanny state" and "ancient motherlands"."[64]   A reading of societal, national and familial understandings of gender roles and identities (most often defined through an individual's participation in a nationally endorsed heteropatriarchal family unit) can help in interpreting the ways in which citizenship responsibilities are constructed and maintained in gendered ways as well as giving far broader insights into the nature and conduct of Singaporean public and everyday life.[65] More significantly, such readings also demonstrate how the body of the women comes to stand not just for and of the nation, but as a site where international flows of change must be resisted and regulated or bent to the will and purpose of the postcolonial state; tamed and rendered either socially and culturally harmless or economically and politically useful.

Much has been made of Singapore's attempts to manage a multi-racial population comprised of Chinese, Malays, Indians and a significant number of foreign workers, through the crafting of a national identity based around an Asian-ness informed strongly by an economically pragmatic version of neo-Confucian ethics.[66] The management and control of women's bodies, lives, gender identities, sexualities and labour is central to this process. As Chatterjee has explained with regard to women's position within postcolonial nationalism, while independence from colonial governance may often be figured as a moment of women's liberation and bestowal of the modernist rights and responsibilities of citizenship within the postcolonial state, more often than

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[64] Lenore Lyons, "The Politics of Gender Activism," http://www.jamesgomeznews.com/article.php?AID=165.
[65] Kenneth Paul Tan, ""Civic Society" And The "New Economy" In Patriarchal Singapore: Emasculating the Political, Feminizing the Public," *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 15, no. 2 (2001): 106.
[66] See, eg: Chua Beng-Huat, "Culture, Multiracialism and National Identity in Singapore," in *Trajectories: Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, ed. Kuan-Hsing Chen (New York and London: Routledge, 1998).

not, the practical positioning of women within postcolonial nationalisms has been more ambiguous, with femininity and biological reproduction being pressed into the service of national economic and political goals and figured as both complementary and subordinate to the male owned and operated structures of state, family and corporation.[67] As one of the foremost examples of working womanhood in Singapore, the Singapore Girl figure demonstrates the ways in which patriarchal state and cultural forces simultaneously rely on women's labour while attempting to shape and control the nature of appropriately national and familial femininities.

In ways similar to women's employment in many other Singaporean settings, the very employment terms and responsibilities offered to Singapore Airlines' female flight attendants underlines and enforces such externally impacted social and national expectations of appropriate female behaviour. Speaking of her own experience of the tensions between her employment with Singapore Airlines and those responsibilities supposedly deriving from her gender, Margaret Tan has written that "I was brought up to believe that a woman's role is to find a husband, keep a neat house and have children." [68] It is assumed by both society and corporation that female flight attendants, who make up approximately 60% of the Singapore Airlines' cabin crew, will (and should) fulfil their familial responsibilities through marriage, procreation and the assumption of the national and societal responsibilities of motherhood and family life. And while, as the quote from Margaret Tan suggests, the pressures operating from within family, culture and society to do just this are strong, they are reinforced by employment policies and practices that act to shepherd woman workers towards the fulfilment of their gendered obligations. While male cabin crew working for the airline are employed in ongoing, permanent positions, female flight attendants are instead employed under a system of five year contracts which can be renewed up to a maximum of five times.[69] Given these restrictions, it is considerably more difficult for a female flight attendant to progress to in-flight supervisory positions than it is for her male counterparts, despite the centrality of the Singapore Girl image to the airline's advertising and product positioning. Further, the contract system allows for a continual replenishment of the ranks of the airline's female flight attendants, ensuring that the airline continues to present to the world a vision of youthful female beauty both in its in-flight service and in its advertising featuring female crew members. In the air,

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[67] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), Chapter 6.
[68] Li Xueying, "What It Means to Be a S'pore Woman."
[69] Clark, "They Enjoy Being A "Girl"."

while it is often male cabin crew who occupy senior supervisory positions, it is the female attendants who interact more with customers, serving meals and beverages and responding to customer requests.[70] By denying women flight attendants security of tenure in their positions beyond the five-year contractual term, there is a strong push for them to seek alternative careers on the ground, beyond in-flight customer service (until recently Singapore Airlines was the sole Singapore based airline offering such a career path and remains by far the dominant Singaporean employer in the industry) or to "settle down" into a familial role as housewife and mother, perhaps complemented by a less globally-mobile career structure.[71] Even beyond these coercive employment policies, societal expectations operating at the most intimate and domestic everyday levels also intervene to push Singapore Airlines' female flight attendants away from long-term career goals and towards more nationally productive, and economically useful, gendered behaviour. To quote Margaret Tan once more: "[o]n the surface, our generation appears very fortunate because of the opportunities available. But though we have become crucial to the economy through our work, there has not been a corresponding decrease in our domestic duties."[72]

The positioning of the family unit, and certain essentialist forms of reproductive heterosexuality and gendered identity as central to Singaporean economic success, social cohesion and national identity serves to link the internationally configured performance of gender to other aspects of Singaporean everyday life which a reading of the Singapore Girl figure can help illuminate. Partly this has to do with the ambiguous and often contradictory processes which epitomise Singaporean nationalism and identity: the embrace of Western modernity combined with a simultaneous desire to assert and protect the Asian cultural identities of the nation's main ethnic groups. The family, and the household emerge here as profoundly important sites where the nation can act to protect cultural values, to ensure patriarchal dominance and to socialise offspring to serve nation and help meet the requirements to which its international relations give rise.[73] As PuruShotam argues, global capitalism and Singapore nationalism conspire together to require that

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[70] Arnold, "For the Singapore Girl, It's Her Time to Shine."

[71] The expectation for women to become married and have children also lay behind a policy which operated for many years restricting women's access to professional medical education at the National University of Singapore to just one third of a particular year cohort. See generally: Audrey Tan, "Beyond Chromosomes," *Singapore Medical Association News* 36, no. 8 (August) (2004), Toh Han Chong, "Medicine Women - Pride and Prejudice," *Singapore Medical Association News* 36, no. 8 (August) (2004).

[72] Li Xueying, "What It Means to Be a S'pore Woman."

[73] Nirmala PuruShotam, "Between Compliance and Resistance: Women and the Middle-Class Way of Life in Singapore," in *Gender and Power in Affluent Asia*, ed. Krishna Sen and Maila Stivens, The New Rich in Asia (London: Routledge, 1998), 145, Eddie Chen-Yu Kuo and Aline Kan Wong, *The Contemporary Family in Singapore: A Structure and Change* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1979), 11.

"women must engage in such work as doing enticing bodies, doing beautiful homes, making beautiful children who will grow up good and smart, and so forth. In do this they must maintain an image of modernity that is fused with the image of "Asian-ness" generally and "Chinese-ness" etc., specifically."[74] While her analysis does not specifically address the Singapore Girl figure, it is not difficult to discern the similarities between the transnational, economically informed and Orientalist construction of the Singapore Girl and the admittedly less extreme but nonetheless pervasive ways in which Singaporean femininity more broadly is structured and enforced by a patriarchal society.

Such a vision of the nation's women as representative of the nation itself, as storehouses and transmitters of cultural knowledge and as mother-carers, is reconfigured in the case of the Singapore Girl phenomenon to encompass women's roles as efficient managers of domestic and service-related duties, as serving the economy through paid work and as symbols of national success and international standing. Singaporean journalist Asad Latif has written of the Singapore Girl that

> she is an apt representative of an airline whose reputation reflects Singapore's own penchant for efficiency, punctuality and other qualities needed to make things work. Indeed, the flag-carrier is an obvious manifestation of the national drive to survive and succeed because it embodies this tiny city-state's strategy of making the whole world its economic hinterland.[75]

In passages such as this it is possible to discern a linkage in the minds of political and cultural elites between the policing of appropriate gender roles and issues of national sovereignty, international reputation, economic considerations and defence and strategic issues. We have already explored how the Singapore Girl figure is presented as integral to both national economic objectives and the corporate profitability of the government owned Singapore Airlines. Yet it is also important to note the ways in which the domestic enforcement of nationally endorsed and internationally configured gendered behaviour carries over into ideas of citizenship and permissible identities for women *within* national spaces. This process both relies upon and reinforces the international forces that act upon women's identities. Women's roles in internationally situated issues such as those of national defence and security issues, for instance, are defined very much through the positioning of women in domestically embedded ways: in relation to individual men (husbands, sons, lovers), through their positions within corporations (as citizen-workers

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[74] Nirmala PuruShotam, "'Woman' as Boundary: Raising the Communitarian against Critical Imaginings," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 3, no. 3 (2002): 343.
[75] Asad Latif, "A Speck on the Map but It's a Giant in the Air," *Straits Times* 1998.

contributing to the national effort through productive labour) or as part of family units. I have already explored the positioning of women with reference to the masculine preserve of Singaporean national service. Yet in matters of defence more broadly, and most notably in Singapore's national programme of Total Defence, women's roles both reflect and reinforce internationally impacted understandings of gendered behaviour. This may go some way towards explaining the continued refusal on the part of the Singapore government to extend national service obligations to female Singaporeans, despite some calls from women's groups in Singapore for this to occur. Addressing such requests, a Singaporean government minister described women's work in both paid employment and in familial settings as central to their roles in national defence and highlighted their position in areas such as the family, nursing and community and cultural life as "critical pillars in support of civil, psychological and social defence".[76] A similar example of such assertions of expected gendered behaviour can be seen in an online special prepared by the Straits Times newspaper to celebrate Singapore's National Day in 2004. Describing a Singaporean family, the website listed the roles of the various family members under the heading "Order of Battle", with the husband described as "family commandant", the wife as "home commandant" and the two children of the couple as "toy gun sniper" and "trainee soldier in arms" respectively. The article highlighted the wife's role as packing the husband's uniform and toiletries in preparation for his reservist military training, cooking for him prior to him leaving for his military camp and her having to care for the children and the household in his absence. Her qualifications and paid employment as a lawyer are glossed over in this nationalist celebration and presented as secondary to her roles as woman, mother and wife.[77] Addressing such characterisations of women in Singapore, Lenore Lyons has examined the ways in which militarism, cultural values and citizenship rights impact on gender activism in Singapore. She asks:

> For women who are daily confronted with billboard images of men in combat fatigues declaring 'This mud on my face is soil, our soil', can rights and responsibilities in the civil sphere ever transcend mothering? And if not, what are the implications if civil society activists pursue national service as a 'women's rights' issue?[78]

The connections between motherhood and the military are not new in the Singapore context. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the nervousness of Singaporean bureaucrats and

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[76] "NS for Women? Yet Another Nay," *The Straits Times*, 16 March 2004.
[77] Leslie Koh et al., "O: Being Operational Ready Isn't Just a Man's Job," Straits Times Interactive, http://straitstimes.asia1.com.sg/mnt/html/webspecial/nd04/o.html.
[78] Lyons, "The Politics of Gender Activism."

politicians regarding the potential loss of new soldiers for the nation as a result of falling birth rates has led to the two issues being firmly linked in both policy formulation and public affairs. Some community groups have even called for pregnancy and childbirth to be regarded as a form of national service for women,[79] while political and public debate has centred around ways in which to encourage procreation as a fulfilment of citizenship responsibilities.[80] Identifying the regimentation and social control of society implicit in such policies, a recent position paper from the Association of Women for Action and Research featured on its cover a picture of a pregnant woman's gravid stomach protruding from a military camouflage uniform.[81]

Two different types of families - the nuclear family unit and the family of the nation - act to ensure to that naturalised and essentialised gender subjectivities are linked explicitly to an attempt by the state to make compulsory the performance of reproductive heterosexual relations. Membership in a family – national and biological – is earned and defined through one's adherence to a normative and reproductively oriented heterosexuality. This in turn acts to reinforce an essentialised division between men and women and feeds back into the creation of essential versions of nationalistically endorsed genders. Lyons has explored this process, arguing that in its management of citizenship and social order, the Singapore state has relied on the binary pairing of state approved masculine and feminine subjectivities to define what can be regarded as a good citizen: one who conforms to the state's construction of normative heterosexuality and fulfils their nationalist duties through procreation and formation of a family unit. She explores the ways in which the state intervenes in the sexual lives of Singaporeans to police this normative heterosexuality, arguing that the marginalization and in many cases, criminalization of what are presented as deviant or aberrant sexualities - homosexualities, alien sexualities, non-reproductive sexualities, non-marital sexualities and transsexualities – demonstrates a strong desire on the part of the state to protect existing gender and sexual relations within Singapore, and reflects a profoundly gendered view of issues of citizenship and nationhood.[82] Her work resonates strongly with that of

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[79] Heng and Devan, "State Fatherhood," 348.

[80] See generally: Peter Edidin, "Word for Word/Singapore Swingers; Romance, the Patriotic Duty of Procreation and the Fate of Nations," *The New York Times*, 8 February 2004, Sheila McNulty, "In a Single-Minded State," *The Financial Times*, 16 September 2000, Seth Mydans, "Singapore, Hoping for a Baby Boom, Makes Sex a Civic Duty," *The New York Times*, 15 April 2001, Kenneth Paul Tan, "Sexing up Singapore," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 6, no. 4 (2003), Tee Hun Ching, "It's Your 'Duty' to Procreate," *The Straits Times*, 10 March 2004.

[81] Association of Women for Action and Research, "Beyond Babies: National Duty or Personal Choice," (Singapore: Association of Women for Action and Research,, 2004).

[82] Lenore Lyons, "Sexing the Nation: Normative Heterosexuality and The "Good" Singaporean Citizen," in *The Nation of the Other: Constructions of Nation in Contemporary Cultural and Literary Discourses*, ed. Anna Branach-Kallas and Katarzyna Wieckowska (Torun: Uniwersytet Mikolaja Kopernika, 2004).

Jacqui Alexander on the positioning of conjugal heterosexuality as economically and nationalistically productive for the postcolonial state.[83] Yet Alexander extends her analysis of the state's interventions to define forms of nationally approved gender and sexuality to examine policies and deployments of gender and sexuality that appear on the surface to contradict such goals. In her work on Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas, she highlights the seeming disconnect between colonially derived models of sexual morality and the crafting of a postcolonial nationalism based around reproductive heterosexuality and the family unit on the one hand, and those externally directed visions of hypersensual femininity and sexual availability of women which are contained in international tourist advertising and globally circulating understandings of a figure such as "Bahama Mama" on the other. Yet on closer inspection, such processes are not as paradoxical as they might first seem. In ways very similar to other interventions into gendered and sexual subjectivity creation, they derive from the postcolonial state – and its heteropatriarchal managers' - interest in using women's bodies and sexualities in their attempts to gain international recognition and a share of the global tourist market.[84] They also indicate the extent to which the international circulation of metropolitan and neo-colonial Orientalist and sexualised understandings of gender are understood as powerful and internationally available resources available for the exploitation of the postcolonial state. There is an obvious consonance between Alexander's readings of what has been occurring in the postcolonial states of the Caribbean and Singapore's externally focussed usage of the Singapore Girl figure. Both of these presentations of sexualised and essentialised femininities to the international rely upon certain political economies of transnational desire. In the Singaporean case, Helen Johnson has strongly criticised the way women's bodies, gender identities and sexualities are commodified in the pursuit of tourist dollars and business investment by the nationalist state and its corporate subsidiaries. She writes that artificial and essentialised visions of Asian femininity such as the Singapore Girl act to reproduce racial, gendered and sexualised difference around the world through their association of the Asian women with the provision of service and sex.[85]

For Alexander, such processes are intrinsically linked to the sexual economies of European colonialism She writes of the ways in which alterity becomes a signifier of erotic pleasure, arguing

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[83] M. Jacqui Alexander, "Not Just (Any)*Body* Can Be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas," *Feminist Review* 48 (1994).
[84] Ibid.: 18-20.
[85] Helen Johnson, "Spice Girls?," http://www.feminista.com/archives/v2n11/johnson.html.

that "European fantasies of colonial conquest, the exotic, the erotic, the dark, the primitive, of danger, dread and desire all converge here…and are traced back through the contours of imperial geography."[86] Certainly this is a persuasive way of reading a phenomenon such as the Singapore Girl, especially given Singapore's long-standing colonial reputation as a place of erotic possibility and sexual license for European sojourners and military personnel[87] and the influence of colonial ideologies on contemporary Singaporean national identity. Yet while Alexander's linkage of colonial sexual geographies to contemporary transnational deployments of women's sexuality in national tourism campaigns is persuasive, to fully explain the sexual politics of a figure such as the Singapore Girl one must also be prepared to examine the kinds of sexualities that the idealised brand image packages and portrays. Here, the economic and social imperatives of the postcolonial state, fundamentally constructed with reference to ideas of international standing, the management of economic and political vulnerability and the search for global prestige, act to shape the very kinds of Singaporean women's sexualities that are displayed and sold within the international domain. Most obviously, these are women's *hetero*sexualities. Given the range of nationalistic messages that it is meant to convey and uphold, it is almost inconceivable that the Singapore Girl figure could ever be linked to an assertive female homosexual or lesbian subjectivity (regardless of the actual sexual orientations of the women recruited as female flight attendants for Singapore Airlines). If, as Alexander argues not just anybody or any sexuality can enjoy the full rights of postcolonial citizenship, only certain female heterosexualities can be allowed to enter into the international domain as representatives of nation and corporation. Here we confront another seeming – but not quite – paradox within postcolonial nationalist deployments of heterosexuality. The constructed and presumed heterosexualities of the airline's female flight attendants engages an expected and essential male heterosexual desire among its business passengers and advertising targets. While within Singapore the woman's body is figured as a site where state codes of conjugal heteronormativity must be written upon the woman's body to transform it into a machine for economic productivity, sexual and social eugenic reproduction and familial maintenance, extra-territorially the representations of Singapore womanhood found in the Singapore Girl figure rely upon the possibility of, but (and this is a key point) never the consummation of, female

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[86] Alexander, "Not Just (Any) *Body* Can Be a Citizen," 19.
[87] A filmic representation of just such processes can be seen in Hong Kong director Yonfan's 1995 film *Bugis Street* which explores issues of prostitution, transvestism and the global sex trade in a 1960s Singapore filled with American soldiers on rest and recreation leave.

heterosexual availability. As we have already seen, the Singapore court system and airline operational policies work to punish those passengers who seek to sexually harass or act upon the fantasies which the airline holds out in its advertising. There is a curious logic to the state and corporate construction of an Orientalist sexual fantasy designed to engage Western capital together with a strict policing of the non-consummation of that sexual promise. While much of this can understandably be explained as a legitimate intervention to protect workers from sexual harassment, it also resonates with Singaporean reproductive policies and interventions into citizens' sexual lives aimed at ensuring the continuation of the nation's racial composition and social order and protecting the nation, and its women, from cultural – and in this case, (raising the old colonial spectre of miscegenation) sexual - contamination from the West. As Lyons argues, "the sexuality of non-citizens represents the most tangible threat to the nation."[88] In this key way, the Singapore Girl differs from another widely consumed Singaporean feminine subjectivity, the Sarong Party Girl, a buxom, sexually indiscriminate and scantily clad Asian woman obsessed with marriage to a Western expatriate and the life of luxury his supposedly high salary will allow. Ling has identified the Sarong Party Girl as an image of the nation's "bad girl", who makes overt the nexus between interracial desire, economics and sexuality as well as flaunting her desires for the material wealth of the West.[89] The sexual experience and predatory nature of the Sarong Party Girl (societally censured and ridiculed) stands in stark contrast to the sublimated sexual promise held out by the Singapore Girl (nationalist icon *par excellance*), while highlighting the fact that both are, of course, products of selective self-Orientalism and dialogue with Western sexual cultures in a chase for positive economic outcomes.[90]

Yet it is also important to note that the sexualised and Orientalist meanings contained in the Singapore Girl image seemingly do not just appeal to Western business travellers and tourists. Much of Singapore Airlines' growth has come from travellers from within its own region: from Asian business executives from the economic hubs of Hong Kong, Shanghai or Bangkok to migrant domestic and manual labourers from source countries such as the Philippines, Bangladesh or Sri Lanka as well as members of the increasingly affluent middle classes of countries such as

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[88] Lyons, "Sexing the Nation," 90.
[89] Ling, *Postcolonial International Relations*, 159-61. On the Sarong Party Girl generally see: Jim Aitchison and Theseus Chan, *Sarong Party Girl* (Singapore: Angsana Books, 1994).
[90] A similar linkage was drawn in the pages of the Singaporean comedic social commentary website *Talking Cock* which linked the effects of the Asian economic crisis to a fictitious response from Singapore Airlines' management centred upon shortening the length of the Singapore Girl's sarong kebaya: "Michael Bloombird", "To Tighten Belts, SIA to Shorten Skirts," http://www.talkingcock.com/html/article.php?sid=1079.

China, India, Indonesia and Malaysia. While I am unaware of any material exploring the intra-regional appeal or consumption of the Singapore Girl figure (beyond her consumption as nationalist icon within Singapore itself), such processes may well be indicative not just of future avenues of enquiry but of the globalised nature and appeal of Orientalist tropes and meanings in a postcolonial world. The fact that this is not exclusively a cross-cultural, interracial or even transnational phenomenon raises intriguing questions about the extent to which the presentation of a youthful "Asian" woman in in-flight service makes possible certain demands or modes of consumption on the part of passengers from a variety of cultural, national and class backgrounds that might be impossible, or at least less likely, should the in-flight service be rendered by a man, a Caucasian woman or an older woman.

The hybrid modes of heteropatriarchal desire –transcultural, domestic and regional – that act upon Singaporean women's lives are also reflected in the often complex relationship between the Singapore Girl figure and feminist ideologies drawn from both within Singaporean spaces but also as globally circulating flows of social and political change. As we have already explored, the feminist promise held out by women's participation in the attainment of independence from a colonial power can quickly evaporate and be replaced with a strict institution of heteropatriarchal control and enforced gender roles within the nationalist postcolonial state. In the Singapore case, while the legislation implementing a Singaporean Women's Charter is clearly influenced by globally circulating feminist precepts regarding women's position in society (in areas such as sexual autonomy, divorce rights, access to employment and education opportunities etc), practically its outcomes have left some Singaporean feminist commentators disappointed. Certain scholars have lamented the fact that despite its early feminist promise, the process of defining modern female Singaporean subjecthood that began with the institution of the Women's Charter in 1961, has become "harnessed to the neo-Orientalist patriarchy of the evolving capitalist-racist state."[91] Geraldine Heng, for instance has portrayed Singaporean women as ideological and political resources manipulated by the postcolonial state and, speaking explicitly of the usage of women's bodies and identities in a figure such as the Singapore Girl, has argued that

> [T]he production of a sexualized femininity as a commodity for negotiation and and trading in the profitable, if competitive, air-travel-services market in Asia underscores the necessarily oppositional

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[91] Esha Niyogi De, "Embodied Modernities: Feminist Agency in Singapore Women's Literature," http://www.genders.org/g36/g36_de.html.

relationship between feminist interests and state-sponsored descriptions of the national interest in the contemporary Third World.[92]

This equivocal relationship between postcolonial nationalism and feminist ideologies has real implications for Singapore women. PuruShotam has argued that in many ways – she points to Singaporean career women's dependence on migrant domestic labour as well as state interventions into defining a range of acceptable postcolonial feminisms – Singaporean women's positioning as both modern citizen-subjects and as cultural repositories of Asian-ness (vis-a-vis a threatening culturally expansive West) renders equality between the sexes in Singapore impossible. She speaks of how feminism has been domesticated in the service of the patriarchal, modernist state, arguing that Singapore women are encouraged to adopt an ideal form of state-sanctioned and unthreatening feminism, "bespeaking as it does not so much of a feminist woman, but a liberated woman - a combination of being modern but not Western, modern and Asian – of always being cognizant of boundaries being for the good of all of us in the family, in the nation."[93] For an example of precisely the ways in which these nationally-endorsed feminisms and feminine subjectivities are articulated within this domain of a state-approved "ideal" feminism, it is instructive to return to Singapore journalist Sumiko Tan. Tan's regular columns for the state-owned *Straits Times* newspaper on social issues (and her position as one of the co-authors of a hagiographic glossy coffee-table book on the life of Lee Kuan Yew[94]) position her within the very limited feminist domain identified by PuruShotam. In 2002 one of her newspaper columns entitled "Singapore Women Fierce? So What?" raised the issue of women being insufficiently feminine in their relations with male Singaporean partners and husbands. Tan's argument, in line with the modernist, economically pragmatist and familial-patriarchal logic of the state, was that women through their paid employment could better contribute to the financial stability and comfort of a family unit and household.[95] Elsewhere, Tan (seemingly ever-eager to prove her nationalist credentials) has written of the Singapore Girl image's interface with Singaporean femininities, presenting the brand image as representative of the nation's women themselves. Referring her readers to the Millennium Time Capsule artefacts, she enthusiastically gushes that

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[92] Heng, "'A Great Way to Fly'," 38.
[93] PuruShotam, "'Woman' as Boundary," 349. See also: Chitra Sankaran and Chng Huang Hoon, ""We Women Aren't Free to Die": Transacting Asian Sexualities in a Feminist Classroom in Singapore," *Critical Asian Studies* 36, no. 2 (2004).
[94] Fook Kwang Han, Warren Fernandez, and Sumiko Tan, *Lee Kuan Yew: The Man and His Ideas* (Singapore: Times Editions Pte Ltd, 1998).
[95] Sumiko Tan, "Singapore Women Fierce? So What?," *The Straits Times* 2002.

> [c]ome 2050, when the Millennium Time Capsule is prised open…when the sarong kebaya is taken out of the capsule and unfolded for all to see, let it be a reminder of the Singapore Girl, a symbol of the country's women, at the turn of the millennium – poised, groomed and oh-so-sexy. If I were still around then [sic], I would be so proud.[96]

Tan's presentation of the Singapore Girl in this way serves to draw our attention to the ways in which the Singapore Girl figure acts as a site where debates over feminism's role and applicability to Asian societies continue to be articulated. The Singaporean women's group AWARE has argued that advertising the flight attendant as "a great way to fly" is sexist and robs individual women of their humanity.[97] Yet we have also already seen the ways in which commentators – including the editor of Tan's own newspaper, the *Straits Times* – have linked criticism of the Singapore Girl image and working conditions on feminist grounds to a possible loss of economic advantage and global prestige for state and corporation. More interestingly, the very patriotic centrality of the Singapore Girl to Singaporean self-imagining, so enthusiastically propounded by individuals such as Sumiko Tan, has been seized upon by more critical commentators as a way to highlight women's issues in Singapore more broadly. Performance artists such as Amanda Heng have taken the Singapore Girl icon and used it to critically comment on the position of women in Singaporean society in installation exhibits such as "Smile. I am a Singapore Girl" and "Singapore Girl at Work in Dresden" aiming to challenge the easy consumption of women's service and sexualities within a patriarchal and militarised Singapore as well as the international consumption of images of Singaporean femininity contained in the Singapore Girl figure.[98]

The airline is quick to distance itself from accusations of sexism or commodification of women. Asked to address precisely this point in a recent interview, then chief executive, Cheong Choong Kong replied: "I should be prepared for that question it comes up all the time…I think the Singapore girl is a symbol of femininity perhaps, grace, oriental grace, the service mentality, but no more than that."[99] Ian Batey, seeming to enthusiastically adopt a relativist position regarding feminism's applicability to non-Western cultures and societies has castigated Western feminists, arguing that "[i]f the Western feminist critics toured SIA's home region and seriously connected with young Asian women, I think they'd retract their views about the airline's *Singapore Girl*

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[96] Tan, "Don't Let Your Hair Down Too Much."
[97] Arnold, "For the Singapore Girl, It's Her Time to Shine."
[98] Amanda Liang Ngim Heng, "Smile. I Am a Singapore Girl," Trace: Installaction Art Space, http://www.tracegallery.org/artists/amanda_heng/index.htm.
[99] CNN, "Talkasia - Dr. Cheong Transcript," CNN, http://archives.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/03/12/talkasia.cheong.transcript/.

advertising".[100] The sense of personal affront he feels due to such criticisms of the Singapore Girl is perhaps captured in his characterisation of Western feminists (he seemingly ignores the fact that much of the criticism of the brand image has come from *within* Singapore) as "evil".[101]

Batey does not, perhaps, need to be so worried. The forms of state-sanctioned feminism and state constructions of female subjectivities in Singapore act to ensure both a high level of national support for the Singapore Girl figure, and a steady stream of applications for jobs as female flight attendants with Singapore Airlines. And in this, too, it is possible to also detect the sorts of state sponsored feminisms identified by PuruShotam. Yet do these function somewhat differently in this case? Employment as a Singapore Girl offers individual women the chance of economic independence, global travel and transcultural experiences that would otherwise be difficult (not to mention expensive) to attain. And it does so while ensuring such women receive a high level of social prestige given the patriotic positioning of the Singapore Girl figure and the symbolic and economic value ascribed to their work. This would appear to be one area where women have a comparative advantage over men in selection for employment, both given the inherently gendered requirements of the "job description" as well as the fact that, given the lack of state-imposed military obligations, women are more globally mobile than those Singaporean men required to serve their national service. Given the amount of travel and length of time spent distant from Singapore itself, such employment also holds out the opportunity of crafting individual gendered identities which can encompass remaining single or allow for significant development of personal autonomy due to distance from state, cultural and familial structures of (patriarchal) control. These factors suggest a mode of reading the Singapore Girl that might begin with an individual woman's empowerment rather than her subjugation.

How this plays out in practise is harder to determine. The complex skein of personal motivations and personality and their interrelationship with the panoptic structures of state and corporate, domestic and global control will effect each individual woman differently. Certainly it is easy to read the Singapore Girl figure in the way suggested by LHM Ling, as an example of what she terms substantive mimicry: a "cumulative strategy of integrated, more coherent problem solving, producing a hybrid sense of self and other. Arising from the interstices of contending

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[100] Batey, *Asian Branding*, 121-22. Original emphasis
[101] Ibid. There is of course a great deal of overlap between Batey's characterisation of Western feminisms as inappropriate and evil and the (admittedly more sophisticated) understandings of feminism and women's rights promulgated by the Singapore state.

worldviews, substantive mimicry fosters learning that draws on the cultural richness of *mélange* multiplicity without miring the problem solver in its divisive differences." [102] Yet we must be also aware of Ling's caution that substantive mimicry "does not necessarily improve our lives; it merely resolves prevailing problems."[103] In adopting the Singapore Girl figure as one of non-confrontational feminist resistance, awareness must be maintained that the figure may well be so deeply entrenched within Orientalist and sexist cultures as to defy transformation or render dissent difficult if not impossible. As Grossman argues with respect to the parody of Orientalism within Chinese filmic culture, "within the triangulation of capitalist distribution, orientalist ogling, and a technologically prettified aesthetic of suffering, what room is really left for an analysis of women's issues?"[104] Even artists such as Amanda Heng, in their utilization of the Singapore Girl figure must recognise that the concrete nature of the social and international meanings that circulate around the Singapore Girl figure is what acts to enable and make potent their social critique.

Finally women must also remain crucially aware of the state's ability to co-opt dissent. And it is in this that we see a final way in which the constructions of gender embedded in a figure such as the Singapore Girl are not merely domestic in nature. In his discussion of Singapore's National Day parades, Leong identified a trend whereby even those Singaporeans who chose to reject the nationalist ritual and instead spend the public holiday shopping or travelling internationally, ended up paradoxically embodying and enacting Singaporean-ness through contributions to economic prosperity or representation of the nation abroad.[105] Here it is important to note that not all "Singapore Girls" are in fact Singaporean citizens. In its push to provide service to passengers from a range of cultural backgrounds the airline has hired staff from a variety of national (as well as cultural and ethnic backgrounds): Singaporeans, Malaysians, Koreans, mainland Chinese, Japanese and Indians.[106] These women's representation of Singaporean-ness underlines a point made by PuruShotam: the fact that Singapore, as a particular manifestation of middle-class woman-hood linked to economic success and international prestige has been truly globalized both as a model held out to other (especially developing) countries but also as a series of practises of everyday life (employment, identity, family etc) which shape the contours of feminisms and women's rights

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[102] L. H. M. Ling, "Cultural Chauvinism and the Liberal International Order: "West versus Rest" In Asia's Financial Crisis," in *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender and Class*, ed. Geeta Chowdhry and Sheila Nair (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 117.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Grossman, "Better Beauty through Technology: Chinese Transnational Feminism and the Cinema of Suffering."
[105] Leong Wai Teng, "Consuming the Nation: National Day Parades in Singapore," in *Working Papers*, ed. Chan Kwok Bun, et al. (Singapore: Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore, 1999), 7-8.
[106] Sutherland and McKern, "Singapore Airlines: Global Challenges (Case IB-34)," 21.

across industrialising and newly-rich Asia.[107] If indeed the epitome of Singaporean-ness, the Singapore Girl, can be represented by a non-Singaporean, what might this tell us about the ways gendered identities are constructed in the interstices of nationalism, global capitalism, transnational cultural flows and middle-class consumptive practises?[108] And if the nation's gendered identities can derive from such a broad range of national, cultural and ethnic sources, what does this tell us of the ambiguous patternings of social control and cultural maintenance in a globalizing world?

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[107] PuruShotam, "'Woman' as Boundary," 337.
[108] Margaret Tan, "Re-Presenting the Singapore Girl," in *Singapore Women Re-Presented*, ed. Audrey Chin and Constance Singam (Singapore: Landmark Books, 2004).

PART TWO

UNSAFE SEX

FOUR

SEXUAL COMPASSES

I have given this second section of the thesis the title "Unsafe Sex". In a world confronting global disease epidemics, overpopulation, aggressive nationalism and religious extremism, it is not surprising that sexuality – perhaps most especially the sexuality of others – has come to encompass issues such as irresponsibility, apostasy and compromised patriotism. To engage in sexual activity, or to assert one's sexuality, is (unless it falls within the strictly limited range of state or nationalistically endorsed categories) very often a dangerous act. The concept of unsafe sex comes primarily from the medical discipline of sexual health and I explore it more fully in the final chapter of this section. In these introductory remarks, though, it is sufficient to identify the linguistic shift that has occurred within sexual health promotion, from education campaigns based on the concept of "safe sex" (the idea of being able to overcome the negative health impacts of sex through education, contraception or prophylaxis) to an acknowledgement that sex cannot be rendered completely safe at all. All that can really be talked about is the management of jeopardy in order to make some sex "safer" than others.[1] When it comes to sex, the message now goes, there can be no guarantees, only a tactical navigation of known risk factors and an awareness that much remains unknown.

While sex may be dangerous for individuals, nations and societies, it also poses dangers and challenges to the realm of theory. We have already seen the ways in which international relations theory has sought to manage challenges from its disciplinary outsiders, whether by the creation of theoretical models and disciplinary abstractions that restrict the terms of debate, or by the absorption of critical paradigms in ways that rob them of their radical potential. In the previous section, I advanced a reading of sex and gender's connection with international issues in ways that sought to avoid either of these traps. My strategies may have been new, but in many ways this first section is evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Its concerns remain very much with issues of state

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[1] See Simon Watney, "Safer Sex as Community Practice," in *AIDS: Individual, Cultural and Policy Dimensions*, ed. Peter Aggleton, Peter Davies, and Graham Hart (London and New York: Falmer Press, 1990), Jeffrey Weeks, *Making Sexual History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 153-59.

interest and global economics and build on the strong foundations provided by feminist studies of the international. Analyses of this kind are important, but they can only take us so far. For while my studies of Singapore have shown the ways in which sexuality is a crucial site of interest to both national governments and to individuals and groups managing life within and between national spaces, they still accord a primacy to the state as an arbiter of citizens' relationships with international processes and flows. In this latter section, I am more interested in seeing how sexuality, and the broad gamut of concepts, identities, knowledges and politics that emerge around and about it, provides a means of accessing, understanding or manipulating the international realm on terms and for purposes that might be very different from those of the state. Indeed, the story I have already told about the significance that states accord to the control of sexuality signals the potential of sex to disrupt the state's claim to the exclusive right to shape, enter into or criticise international spaces and their politics. In examining this potential, we leave behind those areas of international theory where it can justifiably be said that the ways have been mapped before. While studies of gender and feminist international relations may thus far have provided us with a broad set of directions, by taking sexuality as our lodestar we now enter a realm of theory that might very well be described with the 16th century cartographer's warning about the dangerous, the rumoured and the unknown: *hic sunt dracones.*[2]

The dangers of the unknown, however, provide us with an opportunity to uncover new forms of knowledge. The core difficulty – and the core promise – of materials on sexuality is their unpredictability and difference; between subjects, societies, religions, cultures, and nations. This would seem to directly contradict the aims of most international theory: the attempt to create systemic models that provide ways of predicting the behaviour of defined actors and the drive to discursively construct an understandable and ordered international realm. I have already flagged the fact that these theories have in-built mechanisms to ensure their disciplinary understandings (and the ordered worlds they envision), remain insulated from challenge or change. The key tactic here is the strategic management of the terms on which materials are used within disciplinary debates. This tendency has been explored most extensively with regard to the role and nature of violence within international systems. For most international theory, even something as passionate, random or

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[2] "Here be dragons." References to this phrase are largely anecdotal and not borne out by cartographic research. Appropriately enough, (given the societies I study here) in the one instance where the phrase does occur on a mediaeval map – the Lenox Globe (circa 1503-1507) - the phrase is used to describe the east coast of Asia: Michael Livingston, "Modern Medieval Map Myths: The Flat World, Ancient Sea-Kings, and Dragons," http://www.strangehorizons.com/2002/20020610/medieval_maps.shtml.

unpredictable as violence is discursively regarded as an input leading to certain outcomes: a process within the system that is variously creative, balancing, resolving of international tension or part of an ongoing and constitutive state of perpetual conflict.[3] More importantly, only certain kinds of violence make the theoretical cut. As Krishna so powerfully argues, some violence – that committed within the state, within colonial empires, and that which goes under the reductive labels of riot, disturbance or upset – does not enter into the calculations of international theory. Issues that are fundamentally transnational in quality, such as genocide, ethnic cleansing, colonial dispossession, communalism or struggles for self-determination can easily be dismissed as irrelevant to the task of international theorising.[4] This wilful theoretical blindness means that a huge part of the conflict, negotiation, peacemaking and dialogue that takes place across cultural and national boundaries never ruffles the calm and settled waters of international theory.

There is a need to take seriously within international study those categories that, like violence, are personally experienced, culturally specific and politically potent. Sexuality is one of these. Working with materials on sexuality can help to highlight the often fictive and perpetually incomplete nature of the pictures painted by mainstream theories. The world that all international theory purports to describe (and in which sexualities take their shapes and their meanings), is intractably messy, a maelstrom of events, flows and processes that carries around the world a myriad of people, products, ideas and lifestyles: the flotsam and jetsam of postcoloniality and modernity. Krishna himself concedes the point that no theory can reflect reality in all its detail: abstraction is a necessity if we are to think in term of theorising or modelling reality. I share with Krishna, though, a belief that theories of the international must at least attempt to account for the complex nature of world affairs and to write theory in ways that take us beyond the intellectual straitjackets of national interests and state behaviour.[5]

In this section, then, I explore in greater detail the promise sexuality holds out to those interested in writing different, and more politically nuanced, stories of international processes. Work from within postcolonial studies offers some pointers here. Reading the histories of

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[3] See generally: Arjun Appadurai, "Dead Certainty: Ethnic Violence in the Era of Globalization," *Public Culture* 10, no. 2 (1998), Mohammed Ayoob, "The Security Problematic of the Third World," *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (1991), Barry R. Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," in *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*, ed. Michael E. Brown (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). See also Anderson's controversial celebration of the creative potential of violence in effecting political change at: Benedict R. O. Anderson, "Democratic Fatalism in South East Asia Today," ABC Radio National, http://www.abc.net.au/rn/deakin/stories/s309714.htm.

[4] Sankaran Krishna, "Race, Amnesia and the Education of International Relations," *Alternatives* 26, no. 4 (2001).

[5] I am influenced here by Appadurai's challenge to "think beyond the nation" in: Arjun Appadurai, "Patriotism and Its Futures," *Public Culture* 5 (1993).

European colonialism, one finds hundreds of examples of the connections between individual sexual choices and the broader processes of international affairs. Whether Empire was understood as a space of sexual opportunity, as a haven from the repressions of Euro-American codes of gendered and sexual behaviour, or even as holding out to colonised people the (usually illusory) prospect of equality with their colonial overlords through mastery of those very codes, sex and gender have long been part of the negotiation of international processes.[6] Many of the European names here would be familiar - Richard Francis Burton, Isabel Burton, T. E. Lawrence, E. M. Forster and Gustave Flaubert would all feature in a listing of key players. Others, due to their gender, ethnicity or class remain largely unknown, their life-worlds accessible only through the sorts of analytical methods championed by the Subaltern Studies collective.[7] What can be said, is that the colonial encounter was also, in many cases, a sexual encounter; for both coloniser and colonised, confronting cultural difference required coming to terms with different systems of gender, sexuality and differences in their social, cultural, legal and religious regulation.

These processes of sexual contact and sexualised understandings continue to operate, though often in different registers, in the contemporary postcolonial world. Sexuality, a key artefact of colonial and postcolonial modernity, intervenes in, and is shaped by, a vast range of dialectical processes (many of which - religion, nationalism, intercultural relations, social change and economic inequality – I explore in the three chapters that make up this section). Sexualities are intimately entangled with the debates and processes which have acted to shape colonial and postcolonial subjectivities and which continue to intervene in the construction of new forms of global politics and new ways of comprehending international domains.[8] To demonstrate this, it is useful to once again turn to an example other than sexuality. I have already presented Krishna's work on the politics of how violence is characterised within international studies as providing an inspiration to challenge international theory's gate-keeping mechanisms and selective blindness by bringing into debate materials on sexuality. Another seemingly unrelated example, this time from the colonial

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[6] See generally: Robert Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), Barbara Hodgson, *Dreaming of East: Western Women and the Exotic Allure of the Orient* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2005), Ronald Hyam, "Empire and Sexual Opportunity," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 14, no. 2 (1986), Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), Grant Parsons, "Another India: Imagining Escape from the Masculine Self," in *At the Edge of International Relations: Postcolonialism, Gender and Dependency*, ed. Phillip Darby (London and New York: Pinter, 1997).
[7] See generally: Ranajit Guha, ed., *A Subaltern Studies Reader 1986-1995* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
[8] See generally, Mahasweta Devi, *Imaginary Maps*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 197-205, Neville Hoad, "Between the White Man's Burden and the White Man's Disease: Tracking Lesbian and Gay Human Rights in Southern Africa," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 5, no. 4 (1999), Mary E. John, "Globalisation, Sexuality and the Visual Field: Issues and Non-Issues for Cultural Critique," in *A Question of Silence? The Sexual Economies of Modern India*, ed. Mary E. John and Janaki Nair (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998).

history and modern resonances of the practice of cartography, can similarly act to give us clues as to how international meanings are created, culturally transmitted and processed in everyday life. In ways similar to those in which Krishna's work leads us to think of the ways in which sexuality might function within the theorisation of international affairs, this example of the reception of the modern science of mapping will help illuminate my approach to seeing sexuality as a source of meaning in and about international spaces.

Thongchai Winichakul has explored the ways in which modern concepts of Thai nationhood and Siam's ability to remain free from *de jure* Western colonial occupation emerge from the nineteenth-century Siamese court's willingness to adopt Western technologies of mapping and sovereignty in order to construct a geographically delimited concept of a Siamese nation under its exclusive political sovereignty and control.[9] The encounter with Western cartographic science, in Thongchai's reading, displaced pre-existing, indigenous Thai conceptions of spatiality and sovereignty and provided Siamese political elites the tools with which to establish both an external national legitimacy (vis-à-vis the British who had occupied neighbouring Burma) and a consolidation of their domestic political control over Siamese territory. As Thongchai has it, in their struggle to maintain their independence and to navigate a world being reshaped by and for European intervention, the Siamese "fought both with force and with maps."[10] In the Siamese case, contact with hitherto unknown Western rationalist categories such as borders and national sovereignty became yoked to a certain way of understanding the national and its interrelationship with its outside. The adoption of such categories in the always-compromised process of postcolonial nationalism and resistance led the Siamese to a particular way of interacting and understanding the realm of the international, a domain which, as postcolonial readings highlight, is itself configured in Western, rationalist terms and for Western ends.[11] Significantly, Thongchai tells us that these understandings did not just circulate within elite governmental spheres, but also at the level of the grassroots and the everyday.[12] He goes on to assert that they continue to mark contemporary visions of Thai nationalism. "Maps", he writes, "have played a part in structuring

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[9] Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994).
[10] Ibid., 112. See also: Jefferson Fox, "*Siam Mapped* and Mapping in Cambodia: Boundaries, Sovereignty and Indigenous Conceptions of Space," *Society and Natural Resources* 15 (2002).
[11] For a reading of the connections between imperial history and postcolonialism see: Phillip Darby, "Taking Fieldhouse Further: Postcolonising Imperial History," *Journal of Commonwealth and Imperial History* 26, no. 2 (1998). The idea of nationalism as a compromised "derivative dicouse" is from: Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (New Delhi: Zed Books, 1985), 1-35.
[12] Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 52.

Thailand in our minds as it [*sic*] has come to represent not only territory but also nationhood and many of its accompanying meanings and values."[13]

In the Siamese case, the idea of the map and the cartographic delineation of the nation's boundaries became key in the imagining of a modern Thai nation through the provision of a series of conceptual categories and terms that continue to define the boundaries between Thai and non-Thai to this day. In the three cases I raise in this section, sexuality functions to provide a similar locus of meaning to which individuals and groups turn in order to navigate the interactions between national, regional, urban and socio-cultural spaces and their outsides. Sexuality, I will be arguing, provides a series of meanings by which international spaces can be known, understood and negotiated; sexual compasses, that allow one to find one's bearing in international spaces and debates by making reference to the most individually understood and corporeally experienced aspects of personality and subjectivity. As I will be arguing throughout this section, the encounter between Western categories of sexuality, sexual morality and sexual behaviour through both colonialism and its latter manifestation, globalization, has proved a potent source of theoretical, practical and everyday knowledges about the international, its functioning and the ways in which it can be strategically navigated, consumed and resisted.

A number of different strands of intellectual enquiry weave through and help pattern my arguments in the three chapters that make up this section. While each of the constituent chapters has its own distinct theoretical emphasis, there are obvious linkages that can be drawn across and between them. Most obviously, this takes the form of a shared indebtedness to a new body of theoretically and politically progressive work on non-Western sexualities. This has been simultaneously – and symbiotically – emerging from the new humanities disciplines of cultural studies, postcolonialism, social geography and deconstructive analysis and from those disciplines traditionally adept at documenting and explaining the processes of everyday life and social change: anthropology, ethnology and sociology. Perhaps the most significant contribution of these new studies has been a heightened awareness of the ethnocentrism that has tended to characterise studies of sexuality.

Early work from within gay and lesbian studies, for instance, pointed to the connections between capitalism and the formation of non-normative sexual identities. The argument goes that where individuals once required heteropatriarchal familial support for basic economic and personal

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[13] Thongchai Winichakul, "Siam Mapped: The Making of Thai Nationhood," *The Ecologist* 26, no. 5 (1996): 220.

survival (with the reproduction of children ensuring that such support continued into the parents' old age), capitalism has provided the economic autonomy required for individuals to dissent from heterosexual familial models and to craft new models of sexual identity and expression.[14] This has been presented as an endogenous process in Western societies, usually culminating in community organising around processes of socio-legal reform and the construction of modern, "liberated" sexual subjects.[15] When it comes to non-Western societies, the tendency has been for Western sexuality theorists to read non-Western sexualities in accordance with this broad schema, altered only to the extent required to accommodate the impact of the transmission of modern regimes of sexual behaviour, morality and identity from the West to the non-West through processes of colonialism, development and transnational globalization.[16] The story told about non-Western cultures in the majority of these analyses has largely been one of a flow of ideas, sexual identities and sexual practices emanating from Western constructs of feminism, gay and lesbian liberation and personal sexual autonomy spread throughout the world by the devices of transnational capitalism, cultural/sexual tourism and Western media forms. Non-Western sexual cultures have largely been provincialised through their positioning as subject to global capitalism and Western models of sexual identity and behaviour.[17]

It is easy to censure such approaches, both for their ethnocentrism and for the fact that they downplay the possibility of dissent from dominant Western models of sexual identity or behaviour on the part of members of non-Western societies and cultures (perhaps especially those that have undergone rapid economic development through contact with global capitalism).[18] While such a critique is undoubtedly important, it is not my task here. It is sufficient to identify and celebrate the fact that scholars outside the mainstream of sexuality theorising have begun to think beyond such limitations. A new scholarship on non-Western sexualities is emerging that points

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[14] John D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity," in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Tompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983).

[15] The classic reference is Dennis Altman, *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1972).

[16] Neville Hoad, "Arrested Development or the Queerness of Savages: Resisting Evolutionary Narratives of Difference," *Postcolonial Studies: Culture, Politics, Economy* 3, no. 2 (2000): 152.

[17] I use the term "provincialising" in the manner suggested by Dipesh Chakrabarty in his analysis of the subordination of non-Western histories and societies to Western master narratives. Chakrabarty writes that "[f]or generations now, philosophers and thinkers shaping the nature of social science have produced theories embracing the entirety of humanity. As we well know, these statements have been produced in relative, and sometimes absolute, ignorance of the majority of humankind – i.e., those living in non-Western cultures": Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks For "Indian" Pasts?," *Representations* 37 (1992): 2-3.. For a fuller, though arguably less assertive, articulation of this thesis, see: Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[18] A good example of such critique is Anjali Arondeker, "Border/Line Sex: Queer Postcolonialities, or How Race Matters Outside the United States," *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 7, no. 2 (2005): 246-49. See also: Michael Connors, "Prefacing Research on the Global Gay," *Melbourne Journal of Politics* 24 (1997).

simultaneously to the richness and diversity of sexual traditions in non-Western cultures prior to and in ongoing negotiation with Western contact,[19] as well as to the ways in which regimes of gender and sexuality function in non-Western cultures in ways that are often incommensurate with Western theoretical models or life worlds.[20]

It is these developments – the adoption and refiguring of colonially imposed sexual categories, the survival and reassertion of precolonial elements of sexual self-fashioning and the emergence of new forms of sexual identity, behaviour and meaning in today's globalized and globalizing Asia – that are of such importance to my arguments here. The analytical sophistication that is transforming the study of gender and sexuality provides us with a rich library of materials and case studies. Yet, the impact of these new approaches is not just limited to new materials. The methodologies and examples they offer up give us new tools with which to rethink and reinterpret the transnational dimensions of gender and sexuality. This is evident in the work of scholars such as Ella Shohat who, in her writing on transnational feminisms, has condemned any attempt to impose a sense of unity or sameness on genders or sexualities as they function in various times and places around the world. At the same time, she has signalled the need to think outside of existing categories such as the nation or the state, and to acknowledge that academic enquiry into the sources of gendered and sexual identities and behaviours

> has to begin from the premise that genders, sexualities, races, classes, nations, and even continents exist not as hermetically sealed entities but rather as part of a permeable interwoven relationality. Interlinking critical maps of knowledge is fundamental in a transnational age, typified by the global "travel" of images, sounds, goods, and populations. A relational multicultural feminist project has to reflect this (partially) new moment that requires rethinking of identity designations, intellectual grids, and disciplinary boundaries. We need, I believe, to reflect on the relationships between the diverse interdisciplinary kinds of knowledge constituting multicultural/transnational feminist inquiry: gender and sexuality studies, ethnic and race studies, area and postcolonial studies.[21]

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[19] For an excellent example of such work see: Bret Hinsch, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). Working from historical documentation of Chinese imperial history, Hinsch has identified a rich male homosexual tradition, which operated within China's elite classes. Hinsch traces this homosexual tradition (he eschews identifying the presence of discrete modern social phenomena such as homosexual identities or homosexual subjects) to as far back as the Zhou Dynasty of 1122 to 256 BC and explores its functioning to the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1912.

[20] Good examples include: Chris Berry, Fran Martin, and Audrey Yue, eds., *Mobile Cultures: New Media in Queer Asia* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé and Martin F. Manalansan, IV., eds., *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2002), Peter A. Jackson, "An Explosion of Thai Identities: Global Queering and Re-Imagining Queer Theory," *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 2, no. 4 (2000), Peter A. Jackson, "Pre-Gay, Post-Queer: Thai Perspectives on Proliferating Gender/Sex Diversity in Asia," *Journal of Homosexuality* 40, no. 3/4 (2001), Martin F. Manalansan, IV., "In the Shadows of Stonewall: Examining Gay Transnational Politics and the Diasporic Dilemma," in *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, ed. Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997).

[21] Ella Shohat, "Area Studies, Gender Studies, and the Cartographies of Knowledge," *Social Text* 20, no. 3 (2002): 68.

My task is to explore these processes as they act to constitute sexual, national and international meanings. I will be showing the ways in which the trafficking that is now occurring between colonial, globalizing and local sexual categories is helping shape the negotiations of postcolonial modernity in contemporary Asia. In each of the section's three constituent case studies, I examine the ways sexuality has become intertwined with international issues and how it serves as a key source from which new ideas about international spaces and their politics draw their meanings. Following the methodology I adopted in the first section of the thesis, I do this through the examination of specific grounded examples. The first of these looks at recent controversies over sodomy in Malaysia, the second tracks the emergence of diverse homosexualities in Hong Kong while the third unpacks the challenges to society, nation and individual that have been posed by sexually transmissible infections in Thailand. I have delineated the materials and approach of each of these chapters more thoroughly in the introduction. It is important at this stage, though, to highlight that these three studies are designed to operate in line with Shohat's call to link new studies of sexuality with those areas of enquiry that structure sexual and transnational meanings. Each of them engages with a different set of intellectual formations that arguably are implicated in the creation of ideas about the international and in drawing connections between those ideas and materials about sexuality. I have singled out three of these for specific attention: metaphor, spatiality and the politics of knowledge.

Metaphor has always played a central part in structuring our understandings of international spaces and politics. Indeed, almost all of the enduring intellectual constructs through which we imagine the international are metaphorical in nature. Even the most cursory sampling of these would include the classical Hobbesian metaphor of the Leviathan; those theatrical metaphors that present international spaces as stages or arenas; the political metaphors of international kingdoms, societies or realms; mechanical metaphors of balance and polarities, and even those anthropomorphic metaphors that ascribe aspects of human personality and agency to theoretically defined actors.[22] Yet despite their central place in most disciplinary approaches and their rhetorical power to justify particular political outcomes, theory has thus far proved reasonably reluctant to propose new metaphors that might aid in thinking about international politics or to examine too

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[22] See indicatively: William Bloom, *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 10, Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), Carlos Escudé, "The Anthropomorphic Fallacy in International Relations Discourse," Instituto Iberoamérica y el Mundo, http://www.argentina-rree.com/anthropo/anthropo0.htm, Thomas Hobbes and E. M. Curley, *Leviathan: With Selected Variants from the Latin Edition of 1668* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994).

closely the function and politics of metaphors in scholarly debates.[23] I have already highlighted the partial (in both senses of the word) nature of much existing international theory. Engaging with the politics and operation of metaphoric meaning in international theory helps give the lie to existing disciplinary pretensions about precision and accuracy and to theory's attempts to claim political and intellectual authority through social-scientific and rationalist methodologies. The study of metaphors, which are by their nature products of language, culture and social intercourse, helps us work towards acknowledging and managing the inherent complexities and differences that characterise the contemporary postcolonial world in theory. This is even more the case when we speak of sexual metaphors, which derive so much of their power and meaning from the religious, political and social regulation of gender, sexuality and sex in differing societies. Studying metaphor's inherent basis within particular cultures and its consequent operation in support of specific politics or worldviews helps us progress towards further toward the thesis' goal of thinking and doing international theory in a way that accommodates and reflects political, cultural, social, religious and national difference.

This attempt to take difference and complexity seriously within theory also informs my decision to work with materials on spatiality. The management and theorisation of particular types of spaces has long been a central concern of international theory. Most obviously this has to do with describing or creating specific kinds of spaces, expressed in attempts to paint the nature of the international as a particular kind of space in itself, or to model the actions and behaviours of spatially delimited actors (most obviously modern nation-states) within it. The work I pursue on spatiality here is somewhat different. Firstly, I seek to see how work on sexuality allows us to see more clearly the transnational dimensions of spaces that may not fit – or not fit comfortably – into existing theoretical paradigms. Secondly, I endeavour to understand how spaces that existing international theory may describe as compromised, incomplete or subordinate, or spaces that may not have entered the realm of existing theory's disciplinary purview at all, may prove to be some of the most productive places in which to look for new ideas about the relationships between international politics and sexuality. Here I am influenced by Jane Jacobs' pioneering study of colonial and postcolonial urbanism, and the implications that exploring the urban space can have

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[23] See Marks' critique of the metaphor of the modern prison to explain international relations, and related discussion in: Michael P. Marks, *The Prison as Metaphor: Re-Imagining International Relations* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Group, 2004).

for the study of transnational postcolonial processes, for Western theoretical orthodoxies and for studies of Western and non-Western everyday life. Jacobs argues that

> it is through the local, rendered in detail, that the complex variability of the (post)colonial politics of identity and place can be known….The translocal/transnational tendencies of colonialism and, more latterly, global capitalism, have not resulted in the obliteration of the local or the diminution of the national….To focus on the local is also, then, to attend to the global.[24]

For Jacobs, the focus should be not so much on the metaphorical element of space, but on what she refers to as the "real" geographies that act to structure lives and politics. I track this by essaying the differing sexual identities that are formed by and in the new spatial form of the world city. I am concerned with seeing whether or not such new spatial forms are, as Jacobs would suggest, places where new international meanings take form, "places…saturated with possibilities for the destablisation of imperial relations…through stark anticolonial activities, but also through the negotiations of identity and place which arise through diasporic settlements and hybrid cultural forms."[25]

Michael Shapiro encourages to understand space not just as the "boundary practices dividing a given society into recognized public and private, industrial and leisure, political and administrative and other domains, but also the temporal practices that give both shape and definition to various historical epochs and thereby contribute to the meanings of written and oral statements circulating within them."[26] His comments regarding the difference in meaning over time and space are of special relevance to the final chapter of this section, where I examine the politics of knowledge. Here I am concerned to explore the relationships between historically entrenched disciplinary knowledge forms and the new forms of knowledge about the international that I have attempted to uncover and bring into play in the other chapters of the thesis. I track the relationships that are emerging between systemic, macro-level forms of analysis and those meanings and politics uncovered when we work with materials on gender, sexuality and everyday life. To do this, I investigate the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Thailand, arguing that the dialogues about health and disease that are taking place between local, national and transnational spaces and knowledges work in parallel with a similar circulation of knowledge about the international. I am interested to uncover the ways in which such knowledges of the international are transformed and enter into

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[24] Jane M. Jacobs, *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 6.
[25] Ibid., 4.
[26] Michael J. Shapiro, *Reading the Postmodern Polity: Political Theory as Textual Practice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 4.

dialogue with each other and to scrutinise the ways that new global issues such as disease epidemics function both to reinforce and to challenge existing theoretical structures and approaches.

In addition to the issues described in the above outline, a common theme to all of these chapters is that of the negotiations of postcolonial modernity. This encompasses the interaction of Western and local understandings of sexual morality and identity, differences in socio-economic development, the assertion of postcolonial nationalisms, the uncertainties of global capitalism and urban transformation and the encounter with Western medical science. The ways in which modernity is managed in everyday life is, of course, of significance to the sorts of arguments I will be making throughout. Albert Paolini has explored the ways in which modernity is navigated in a transnational and postcolonial world. He examines the implications of such processes for disciplinary international studies by building upon Bhabha's delineation of "new internationalism" – based around phenomena such as migration, diaspora, displacement and exile[27] - as well as Bhabha's refusal to allow the invocation of "the international" to dictate the terms of scholarly debate, or the treatment of explanatory materials. Paolini argues that

> Bhabha's use of "international" does not denote a boundary of analysis beyond which certain issues and actors are irrelevant, but a boundary that becomes the place from which "something begins its presencing". This "something" incorporates sexuality, race, gender, AIDS and nationalism. In this new internationalism there is no clear dividing line between the inside and the outside of the West.[28]

Paolini's work accords broadly with the kind of approach I have adopted here. For Paolini, modernity is "always contingent and full of opportunities as well as dangers, and even more so under late modernity, when dislocation and upheaval are more pronounced. It is a process that is constantly navigated by local actors and communities that are drawn into its orbit."[29] In each of the Asian case studies that I introduce in this section, to negotiate the postcolonial condition is fundamentally to negotiate the claims, possibilities and dangers of modernity. These processes may well have started with the imposition of Western concepts of modernity in colonialism but they track through to the contemporary era, where many metropolitan Asian cultures now assume a central role in driving modernity transnationally.[30] And while my materials here are from Asia, it

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[27] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 5.
[28] Albert J. Paolini, *Navigating Modernity: Postcolonialism, Identity and International Relations* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 203. Paolini quotes Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 5.
[29] Paolini, *Navigating Modernity*, 205.
[30] Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 37ff.

will quickly be clear that they retain significant applicability to other postcolonial societies – and indeed to the contemporary West itself.

It is to the issues posed by questions such as this that I turn in my concluding remarks. Essentially the mission is to bring my arguments together by asking how the category of the international is imbued with meaning – and the implications this should have for the future development of international theory. Without pre-empting that discussion, it is perhaps useful, in closing, to pose a few of the questions that will be of relevance. If sexuality is a key means of navigating modernity and the contemporary contours of international society and transnational change, how does it operate to shape relations between majority and minority world views? Are the developments I point to here essentially transitory and ephemeral given the supposed collapse of the state as an explicatory category after its being laid siege to by contemporary forms of economic globalization?[31] Or is there life in the old shibboleths of nationalism and an international system defined by state behaviour yet? And in light of the connections between sexual and gendered meanings and transnational processes that I explore here, what does it mean to attempt to find a home in modernity if we are already – in our most private and intimate sexual life worlds – in bed with it?[32] Or might it be the very compromising nature of such a position that makes it such a productive site from which to work towards disciplinary change?

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[31] A sophisticated exploration of this thesis can be found in: Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
[32] I am misquoting Berman's characterisation of modernism as "a struggle to make ourselves at home in a constantly changing world" from: Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 6.

FIVE

SODOMY AS METAPHOR

The category of sodomy is deceptive. Sodomy has almost always functioned as an opaque and ambiguously constituted metaphor. In an intellectual environment shaped by Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, such an assertion is neither controversial, nor revelatory. Indeed, sodomy, famously described by Foucault as "that utterly confused category"[1] is at its most deceptive when its layers of metaphoric meanings come to appear settled and purely descriptive Mark Jordan writes that sodomy "has been vitiated from its invention by fundamental confusions and contradictions. These confusions and contradictions cannot be removed from the category. They are the stuff from which it was made."[2]

Much of sodomy's metaphoric power arises from its central place in the scriptural accounts of both Christianity and Islam. In the Koran, Lot cries out to the men of Sodom and Gomorrah: "You lust after men instead of women. Truly you are a degenerate people".[3] The punishment for this degeneracy is well known: in both the Biblical and Koranic versions of the story, heaven-sent forces destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.[4] Powerful images of vengeful destruction, degeneracy, and social and moral decline linked explicitly with male homosexual acts and sexual licentiousness form part of a globally circulating, cultural and religious understanding of sodomy. Significantly, male homosexual identities are often subsumed by sodomy's apparent explanatory power. Foucault has traced the ways in which ideas about sodomy as religious sin were transformed into understandings of a category of sexual acts (anal intercourse), a certain form of socially disapproved identity (the sodomite or the homosexual) and a series of legal proscriptions. Rather more bluntly, in 1972 Guy Hocquenghem proposed: "[h]omosexuality primarily means anal homosexuality, sodomy."[5]

Such societal and individual notions of sexuality and sexual morality were both called upon and redefined in Malaysia during the recent arrest, trial and imprisonment of former Deputy Prime

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[1] Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (London, United Kingdom: Penguin Books, 1976), 101.

[2] Mark D. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 9.

[3] Sura, 7:76.

[4] Genesis, 19: 24-26; Sura 11:82

[5] Guy Hocquenghem, *Homosexual Desire*, trans. Daniella Dangoor (London, United Kingdom: Alison and Busby, 1978), 84.

Minister Anwar Ibrahim, on charges of sodomy and corruption. Yet, as I argue here, the metaphoric meanings that circulated around the act and concept of sodomy during this episode provide broader insights into a range of areas where Malaysian everyday life connects, or attempts to come to terms, with the international. My arguments here engage both the colonial ideologies and narratives of sexuality in Malaysia, as well as the increasingly strident (and often unexpected) ways in which these have been consumed and deployed following independence. In each of these cases, it is possible to outline the manner in which sexuality can function as a metaphor *for* the international – of the ways in which sexuality provides both a vocabulary and a locus of meaning to which individuals turn in order to explain and make sense of current-day international issues and events.

I have divided the chapter into three sections, each of which utilizes both historical and contemporary Malaysian materials to illustrate its themes. The first explores the way in which the idea of sodomy has come to function as a boundary between the West and the non-West, by examining some of the early colonial history of interactions between European traders and Malay society. It will also demonstrate the ways in which the motives behind the constitution and maintenance of this boundary have shifted over time and how they operate in contemporary Malaysia. The second section deals with the ways in which a notion of postcolonial difference, constituted around conceptions of moral and sexual purity, was brought to bear in the various domestic, political, and judicial events of the Anwar Ibrahim case. The third section demonstrates how, in the Anwar case, the idea of sodomy, and the figure of the sodomite, came to stand for and in a sense personalise, concerns over issues such as postcolonial difference, perceived Western cultural, political and financial interference in Malaysian domestic politics and the impacts of globalization.

In 1695, Captain Alexander Hamilton, a Scottish sea captain and trader sailed into the port of Johore on the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula.[6] There, he met the young ruler of Malacca, Johore and Singapore, Sultan Mahmud Shah. Hamilton recounted his encounter with the Sultan and his people in the published record of his voyages, *A New Account of the East Indies.*

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[6] My thanks go to Raimy Ché-Ross who first alerted me to the British and Malay histories regarding Mahmud Shah.

> In Anno 1695 their king was a youth of twenty years of age, and being vitiously inclined, was so corrupted by adulation and flagitious company, that he became intolerable…He was a great sodomite, and had taken many of his orang kaiya or nobles' sons by force into his palace for that abominable service. A Moorish merchant, who was a freighter on board my ship, had an handsome boy to his son, whom the king one day saw, and would needs have him for a catamite. He threatened the father, that if he did not send him with good will, he would have him by force… [A] guard came in a boat to demand him. I would suffer none to enter but the officer, and an interpreter for the Portuguese language. The officer told me his errand, and, in an huffing manner, threatened me, if I protected him. I made him no answer, but taught him to leap into the river, and bid the interpreter tell the king, that, if he offered the least violence to any that belonged to me, I would fire down his palace about his ears. [7]

Throughout his narrative, Hamilton is at pains to link Mahmud Shah's sadistic nature with his practice of sodomy. At one point he tells of how the Sultan, eager to test the capabilities of a pair of pistols gifted to him by Hamilton, "tried, on a poor fellow on the street, how far they could carry a ball into his flesh and shot him through the shoulder."[8] The account of Hamilton's dealings with the Sultan concludes:

> He continued his insupportable tyranny and brutality for a year or two after I was gone, and his mother, to try if he could be broke off that unnatural custom of converse with males, persuaded a beautiful young woman to visit him, when he was abed, which she did, and allured him with her embraces, but he was so far from being pleased with her conversation, that he called his black guard, and made them break both her arms, for offering to embrace his royal person…Next morning he sent a guard to bring her father's head but he being an orang kaiya did not care to part with it, so the tyrant took a lance in his hand, and swore he would have it; but as he was entering at the door, the orang kaiya passed a long lance through his heart and so made an end of the beast.[9]

Hamilton's description of the life of Mahmud Shah, and his subsequent assassination at the hands of a retainer, is broadly corroborated by the Malay historical chronicles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, Mahmud's same sex erotic preference is euphemistically referenced in an account stating that he had taken "a *peri*, a type of genie, as his wife, and so had no desire for marriage with a human spouse."[10] Interestingly the Malay histories do not link the assassination of Mahmud with his acts of cruelty following a failed heterosexual seduction. According to the *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, Mahmud Shah ordered the disembowelment of the wife of one of his generals after she had eaten a slice of jackfruit meant for the Sultan and it was this act

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[7] Michael Smithies, ed., *Alexander Hamilton: A Scottish Sea Captain in Southeast Asia 1689-1723* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1997), 74-75. Hamilton's book is now out of print, the last edition having been released in 1930 by the Argonaut Press. The portions of Hamilton's manuscript pertaining to his voyages in Southeast Asia have, however, been published in a modern edition, edited by Michael Smithies, and page numbers here reference this edition. Portions of the Hamilton manuscript are also excerpted in: R. O. Winstedt, "A History of Johore (1365-1895 AD)," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* X, no. iii (1932): 46-50.

[8] Smithies, ed., *Alexander Hamilton: A Scottish Sea Captain in Southeast Asia 1689-1723*, 74.

[9] Ibid., 75-76.

[10] Raja Ali Haji Ibn Ahmad, *The Precious Gift (Tuhfat Al-Nafis)*, ed. Wang Gungwu, trans. Virginia Matheson and Barbara Watson Andaya, East Asian Historical Monographs. (Kuala Lumpur and New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

that drove her husband to assassinate him.[11] The chronicles go on to explain how one of his concubines had sex with the dead Sultan, thereby ensuring the continuance of the royal line. It is significant that the Malay histories are relatively more accommodating of the Malay ruler's homosexual behaviour, stressing the Sultan's public (hetero)sexual persona, and fulfilment of his procreative responsibilities (albeit in death) rather than emphasizing his sodomitical identity.[12]

What little attention has been paid by the Western academy to these historical materials has come from disciplinary South East Asian area studies and Malay studies. In many ways, European scholars writing on Mahmud Shah have done so in terms not that different from Captain Hamilton's views of 1695. In 1955, over 250 years later, C. A. Gibson-Hill, commented that "[b]y all counts, Mahmud was a sodomite, or at times a little mad, or both."[13] The respected historian of colonial and precolonial Malaya, R. O. Winstedt, in a passage describing the life of Mahmud Shah goes even further, describing him variously as a "mad prince", a "madman" and a "royal lunatic" while still commenting on his aversion to "all mortal women"[14]

Differing understandings of sodomy and homosexuality were to remain a feature of the colonial encounter between the British and the Malays. Phillip Holden, in his incisive study of the fictional writing of Hugh Clifford (a British civil servant in the Federated Malay States from 1883 to 1903 and Governor of the Straits Settlements from 1927 to 1930) states that Clifford's writings, "[w]ritten with a growing awareness of the specification of the homosexual…are often haunted by the spectre of homoeroticism, with the suggestion that energy may tend in other, subversive directions, that it may need not so much channeling as damning up."[15]

Holden explores the ways in which Clifford's fictional writing and colonial administration, set out to construct, impose, and maintain an appropriate form of colonial Malay masculine subjectivity. Through an analysis of Clifford's understanding of stereotyped figures such as the Malay dandy, Holden advances the thesis that Clifford believed that the figure of the colonial Malay subject hinted "at disruptive, unexpectedly contrary forces, which technologies of the self must

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[11] Ibid., 41-42.
[12] There is an extensive literature on the fact that within many non-Western societies, same-sex sexual behaviour does not necessarily give rise to a specific homosexual identity or subjectivity. See: Peter Drucker, "In the Tropics There Is No Sin: Sexuality and Gay-Lesbian Movements in the Third World," *New Left Review* 218 (1996), Gilbert H. Herdt, ed., *Ritualized Homosexuality in Melanesia*, 1993 Paperback ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xi-xv, Leila J. Rupp, "Toward a Global History of Same-Sex Sexuality," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10, no. 2 (2001).
[13] C. A. Gibson-Hill, "Johore Lama and Other Ancient Sites on the Johore River," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* XXVIII, no. II (1955): 160, n. 91.
[14] R. O. Winstedt, "A History of Malaya," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* XIII, no. i (1935): 146-47.
[15] Philip Holden, *Modern Subjects/Colonial Texts: Hugh Clifford and the Discipline of English Literature in the Straits Settlements and Malaya 1895-1907* (Greensboro: ELT Press, 2000), 49.

manage."[16] Homosexuality always factored in these disruptive forces, especially in the wake of Oscar Wilde's 1895 trial and conviction on charges of sodomy. "Homosexuality, while visible as dandaical effeminacy, was paradoxically conceived of as arising from ungovernable and unruly desires within the male body, which called out for renewed application of transmuting technologies of the self, for vigilance and self-appraisal."[17]

For Clifford, Islam emerged one of these technologies of the self[18] - a culturally specific, Malay "medieval, chivalric system of self-discipline, built on the governance and restraint of the self."[19] Thus, the Islamic religious prohibition on sodomy became conscripted into the service of constructing a self-regulating form of colonial Malay subjectivity based upon both sexual restraint but also the familiar colonial tropes of the dignity of productive labor and individual self-governance.[20] In addition to religious and societal regulation, colonial anti-sodomy legislation was also available and could be brought to bear. Macauley's 1860 Indian Penal code, drafted in the wake of the Indian Mutiny had been imported wholesale into the Straits Settlements in 1871 and prohibited "carnal intercourse against the order of nature".[21]

Hamilton, Clifford, Winstedt, and Gibson-Hill are all contributors to a far broader tradition of colonial writings (both scholarly and fictional) about the non-Western world that explicitly comment on the supposed sexual permissiveness of the East and, of course, the existence of sodomy in the non-West.[22] The early Portuguese traders in China, for instance, wrote that "[t]he greatest fault we do find [among the Chinese] is sodomy, a vice very common among the meaner sort and nothing strange among the best."[23] For Europeans, the colonies were viewed as a space of sexual experimentation away from the strict sexual codes that shaped life in the metropolitan centres. While on a government sponsored tour of Egypt the French novelist Gustave Flaubert was able to expansively proclaim "here…one admits one's sodomy".[24] Similarly, Grant Parsons has

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[16] Ibid., 68.

[17] Ibid., 63. There are, of course, obvious parallels to the perceived effeminacy of the Bengalis by the British in colonial India: Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1995), 18-19.

[18] The term is, of course, Foucault's: Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 16-49.

[19] Holden, *Modern Subjects/Colonial Texts*, 61.

[20] Ibid., See Chapters 2 and 3.

[21] For more on this see: Au Waipang, "The Map's Tale," Yawning Bread, http://www.yawningbread.org/arch_2004/yax-350.htm.

[22] See Rudi C. Bleys, *The Geography of Perversion: Male-to-Male Sexual Behaviour Outside the West and the Ethnographic Imagination 1750-1918* (London and New York: Cassell, 1996), Chapter 1.

[23] Galeote Pereira (c. 1500) 'Certain Reports of the Province of China' in Charles Boxer (ed) South China in the Sixteenth Century (1967) 16-17 as cited in Bret Hinsch, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 1.

[24] Gustave Flaubert, *Flaubert in Egypt: A Sensibility on Tour*, trans. Francis Steegmuller (New York: Penguin, 1972), 84.

argued that in the nineteenth century, empire was seen as providing sanctuary and sexual prospects for British homosexual men alienated by their own culture and society.[25]

These colonial understandings of sodomy served to construct a discourse of Othering, a boundary between the ordered and the chaotic, the known and the unthinkable, the West and the rest. This frontier was rigidly policed and controlled, in the interest of constructing a legitimate sense of national or colonial identity.[26] Jonathan Goldberg, in his study of literary representations of sodomy in renaissance Europe, has written of the ways in which sodomy's metaphoric qualities can serve the interests of constructing a discourse of national selfhood in the face of sodomitical Otherness. [27] While the textual source materials that Goldberg draws upon are well and truly part of the established European literary canon – Shakespeare, Marlowe and Spenser – the politics that inform and shape his work are very much of the contemporary moment. Goldberg sets out to track the connections between renaissance discourses of sodomy and the development of modern sexualities, reading, for instance, between the renaissance texts and the judicial attempts to delimit and define the modern American sodomite as expressed in the now infamous (and since overruled) U.S. Supreme Court case of *Bowers v Hardwick*.[28]

A similar connection could be made between the colonial writings of Hugh Clifford and many of the pronouncements and policies of the recently retired Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr Mahathir Mohamad. Both Clifford and Mahathir concerned themselves with the shaping of appropriate forms of Malay identity and behaviour, and for Mahathir, nowhere was this need for societal (re)shaping more urgent than in the area of Malay identity and culture. These ideas were first explored in his 1970 text, *The Malay Dilemma*[29] which is widely regarded as the template for Malaysia's racially based New Economic Policy, a series of legislative endeavours spanning the years 1971 and 1990 that sought to provide greater economic prosperity to the Malays through positive racial discrimination in commerce and higher education, as well as through easy access to generous government loans schemes.[30] Mahathir has described Malays as "laid-back and prone to taking the easy way out… Working hard, taking risks and being patient is not part of their culture."[31] Speaking

[25] Grant Parsons, "Another India: Imagining Escape from the Masculine Self," in *At the Edge of International Relations: Postcolonialism, Gender and Dependency*, ed. Phillip Darby (London and New York: Pinter, 1997).

[26] Joane Nagel, "Ethnicity and Sexuality," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 113.

[27] Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), xv-xvi. [Original emphasis].

[28] Ibid. *Bowers v Hardwick*, (1986), 478 U.S. 186, 106 S.Ct. 2841, 92 L.Ed.2d 140.

[29] Mahathir Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma* (Singapore and Kuala Lumpur: Times Books International, 1970).

[30] Virgina Matheson Hooker, "Reconfiguring Malay and Islam in Contemporary Malaysia," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2000): 2.

[31] Mahathir Mohamad, "Not One but Two New Malay Dilemmas, Says Mahathir," *Straits Times*, 1 August 2002.

of his attempts to reshape Malay culture and society, Mahathir frequently uses language that could have been taken from Clifford himself:

> I have often defined this cultural change as the move towards becoming a *"New Malay"* - *Melayu Baru*. The New Malay is someone who has a culture that is suitable to the changing times, who is willing to face all challenges, who can compete without assistance, who is educated and learned, sophisticated, disciplined, trustworthy and efficient. Hard work, perseverance, excellence, ethical conduct, and a commitment to the Islamic faith are some of the other elements I include in this definition.[32]

Deepak Mehta, who has explored Muslim societies in India, has written that Islam, with its codes of bodily cleanliness, sexual restraint and emphasis on reproductive heterosexuality acts to powerfully create and impose forms of gendered subjectivity.[33] Mahathir (like Clifford before him) has utilized these aspects of Islam, using it as a core factor in his crafting of a state-sanctioned Malay subjectivity. Given the privileged position of the Malays in contemporary Malaysia, many of the constituent elements of Mahathir's New Malay subjectivity have fed into state-sanctioned constructions of Malaysian citizenship and identity. Just as in colonial times, discourses of sexuality, and even injunctions against sodomy, have figured in the creation of an "appropriate" postcolonial Malaysian subjectivity. Chris Berry has argued that many Asian leaders have attempted to divide "the world into a West and…[a] non-West, with homosexuality [or in this case, sodomy] marking a boundary line".[34] The invocation of this divide can be clearly seen in many of the anti-Western pronouncements of Mahathir, of which the following is representative: "Western societies are riddled with single-parent families, which foster incest, with homosexuality, with cohabitation, with unrestrained avarice, with disrespect for others and, of course with rejection of religious teachings and values…Surely these are signs of an impending collapse."[35]

There is a strong similarity between these rhetorical practices and the colonial discourses of Western self and Eastern other. However the Orientalist schema has here been inverted in the service of nationalistic ends, with issues of sexual morality and behaviour (under which banner homosexual identities and sodomitical practice are specifically targeted for attention) being marshalled against the former colonial powers. As Holden playfully suggests

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[32] Mahathir Mohamad, *A New Deal for Asia* (Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1999), 39. See also the excellent Khoo Boo Teik, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism: An Intellectual Biography of Mahathir Mohamad* (Shah Alam: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[33] Deepak Mehta, "Circumcision, Body, Masculinity: The Ritual Wound and Collective Violence," in *Violence and Subjectivity:*, ed. Veena Das, et al. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[34] Chris Berry, *A Bit on the Side: East-West Topographies of Desire* (Sydney, New South Wales: EMPress, 1994), 74.

[35] Mahathir Mohamad, "Western Modernism vs Eastern Thought," in *The Voice of Asia: Two Leaders Discuss the Coming Century*, ed. Mahathir Mohamad and Shintaro Ishihara (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1995), 81-81.

> There is a certain relish in seeing…Prime Minister Mahathir Bin Mohamad occupy the moral ground the West so long thought to make its own,…Yet there is also a certain irony. At times, Asian values seem very much like Victorian values. Societal discipline is stressed, the need to govern the unruly body of the nation riven by feminised racial and communal desires.[36]

But just as discourses of sexual morality can serve to define, or to delimit, a national boundary, so too can they work as a powerful tool in response to perceived threats from within the postcolonial nation. Much work has been done on the ways in which postcolonial nationalism relies on the construction of gendered subjectivities and the imposition of heterosexuality to ensure state survival through procreation and the transmission of cultural knowledge from mother to child.[37] M. Jacqui Alexander writes of the naturalization of heterosexuality (and the parallel criminalization of marginal, non-procreative sexualities) in her study of postcolonial citizenship, arguing that the policing of sexuality reflects deeply held views on the part of political elites regarding the economic and political desirability of maintaining heterosexuality as a social norm, and the concomitant perception of homosexual subjectivities as threatening the survival and social integrity of the nation.[38] The visible sodomitical subject offers an alternative to heterosexuality and heteronormativity that both replaces the phallocentric logic of heterosexuality with the potential reciprocity of anal sex between men as well as raising the spectre of a non-reproductive enjoyment of sexual desire. This stands as a profound threat to the structures of sexual desire yoked to nationalist ends upon which the postcolonial state is founded.[39] It was precisely such ideas of threatened survival and challenge to state nationalism that were to be of such central importance in the events that unfolded in Malaysia during 1998 and 1999.

When Mahathir Mohamad became Prime Minister of Malaysia in 1981, one of his first acts was to persuade Anwar Ibrahim to join the ruling party, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). Anwar had previously been a popular leader of the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), which as an organization had been highly critical of the Malaysian government. Indeed, Anwar himself had spent nearly two years in prison due to his participation in anti-

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[36] Holden, *Modern Subjects/Colonial Texts*, 135.

[37] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), Chapter 6.

[38] M. Jacqui Alexander, "Not Just (Any)*Body* Can Be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas," *Feminist Review* 48 (1994): 6. Original emphasis.

[39] Gary Dowsett, "What Is Sexuality? A Bent Answer to a Straight Question," *Meanjin* 55, no. 1 (1996): 28. Original emphasis.

government protests regarding peasant poverty.[40] The alliance between Mahathir and Anwar was one of self-interest for both parties. Anwar rose quickly through the ranks of both parliamentary and party positions; anointed as Mahathir's chosen successor, he became Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister in 1993. Mahathir, through his carefully scripted alliance with Anwar, gained substantial prestige and credibility due to Anwar's popularity and perceived integrity. Anwar was also perceived as a mediating factor in tensions between the governing party and Islamic political forces within Malaysia.[41] But the alliance between Mahathir and Anwar had serious flaws. Anwar was often thrust into the role of justifying and supporting Mahathir's increasingly anti-democratic policies. In the 1980s and 1990s, Mahathir moved to bring the judiciary under parliamentary control, to prevent public demonstrations, to limit press freedoms and to strengthen the government's right to detain without trial those considered a national security threat under the terms of the infamous, colonially derived Internal Security Act (ISA). As the economy boomed and Malaysia grew more prosperous, Mahathir also took an increasingly combative stance towards the West – using the rhetoric of Asian values to comment on the supposed moral decline of the West as well as to legitimate his own increasingly autocratic leadership style. The tensions between Mahathir and Anwar were strained even further when Anwar's book *The Asian Renaissance*, which was published in 1996, seemed to overtly criticize many of Mahathir's policies and pronouncements. Anwar wrote that "[i]t is altogether shameful, if ingenious, to cite Asian values as an excuse for autocratic practices and denial of basic rights and liberties".[42] He went on to condemn authoritarian leadership and also called for cultural engagement with the West.[43] This period of Malaysian politics has been described as described as one of competing politicians with competing visions, as both men struggled to implement their different social and political visions for the nation, reflected in Mahathir's policy vision of *Wawasan 2020* (Vision 2020) and Anwar's idea of an Asian renaissance.[44]

The differences between the two men required continuing negotiation. Malaysian politics of the 1990s, as discussed both in the coffee shops of the capital and in the corridors of power, centred around the extent to which Anwar might be able to restrain Mahathir from pursuing more

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[40] Ziauddin Sardar, *The Consumption of Kuala Lumpur* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 185.

[41] John Hilley, *Malaysia: Mahathirism, Hegemony and the New Opposition* (New York and London: Zed Books, 2001), 263-64.

[42] Anwar Ibrahim, *The Asian Renaissance* (Singapore: Times Books International, 1996), 28.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Claudia Derichs, "Competing Politicians, Competing Visions: Mahathir Mohamad's *Wawasan 2020* and Anwar Ibrahim's *Asian Renaissance*," in *Mahathir's Administration: Performance and Crisis in Governance*, ed. Ho Khai Leong and James Chin (Singapore and Kuala Lumpur: Times Books International, 2001), 189.

anti-Western and authoritarian policies, as well as the effect that such assertiveness might have on his chances of eventually assuming the Prime Ministership himself.[45] Matters came to a head as Malaysia fell victim to the currency crisis, which afflicted the Southeast Asian region in the late 1990s. Anwar, as Finance Minister, had increasingly taken a policy approach in support of free markets, favouring both foreign investment and the involvement of the International Monetary Fund. Mahathir, on the other hand, blamed the IMF itself, and Western currency speculators for the financial woes in which Malaysia found itself and advocated the institution of strict currency controls.

At the height of the crisis, in May 1998, a book entitled *50 Reasons why Anwar Cannot Become Prime Minister*, written by Khalid Jafri was published in Kuala Lumpur.[46] The book contained lurid sexual allegations as well as accusations of corruption directed at Anwar and was circulated at the annual UMNO party meeting in June. It was to be the beginning of Anwar's downfall. On September 2 1998 Anwar was abruptly dismissed as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister. Two days later he was expelled from UMNO. Crowds of thousands demonstrated in the streets of Kuala Lumpur in support of Anwar. Mahathir, claiming to have conducted his own investigation, accused Anwar of committing sodomy with, among others, both his former speechwriter, and his adopted brother. Anwar, in the meantime, addressed ever-larger crowds, in both Kuala Lumpur and Penang, denying the allegations of corruption and sexual misconduct against him, and calling for political reform or *reformasi*. As Ziauddin Sardar explains "No one, but no one, actually believed the scandalous sexual allegations against Anwar."[47] Finally, on September 20, Anwar was arrested by police at his home and detained under the terms of the ISA. He was later charged with corruption and sodomy under Malaysia's colonially inherited anti-sodomy legislation. Significantly, the charges were brought in Malaysia's civil courts rather than in the criminal jurisdiction of the Islamic *syariah* courts, despite the fact that the accused and all of the supposed victims were Muslim men. This may well have been an expedient and strategic choice on the part of Anwar's accusers, given the higher burden of proof on the prosecution in *syariah* trials.[48]

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[45] Sardar, *The Consumption of Kuala Lumpur*, 188.

[46] The book was quickly suppressed and is currently banned in Malaysia. An unverified translation is available online at: Khalid Jafri, "50 Reasons Why Anwar Ibrahim Cannot Become Prime Minister of Malaysia," Freedom Malaysia, http://geocities.com/freedom_malaysia/50Dalil.html.

[47] Sardar, *The Consumption of Kuala Lumpur*, 212.

[48] Wu Min Aun, *The Malaysian Legal System* (Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: Longman Malaysia, 1990), 38-44.

The events following Anwar's being charged with sodomy and corruption are well known and documented – his prison beating at the hands of the Inspector-General of Police, the trial (where the mattress on which the alleged acts of sodomy supposedly took place was paraded through the court-room), allegations over an attempt to poison the imprisoned Anwar with arsenic, and the eventual guilty verdicts and prison sentences.[49] Explaining the issue to a meeting of 1000 female members of the UMNO party, Mahathir stated:

> In the West there are homosexual ministers who are accepted. In Malaysia we cannot accept ministers involved in strange activities. Do women want to accept such a horrible leader in Malaysia, a Malay leader and a Muslim leader? We have Women's Day, they have Homosexual Day. They have gay parades. They have men wearing earrings with pride. We cannot accept that as one day God will punish them with a heavy punishment. In Islam it is a big sin.[50]

Mahathir's comments encapsulate many of the issues and meanings I believe are of critical importance to the metaphoric understandings that circulated in this case. Strange activities, deviance, fears of cultural contamination from the West, nationalist imaginings and religious notions of sin – all of these ideas came to inhabit and be given expression by the idea of sodomy. Malaysian journalist Sabri Zain illustrates even more clearly the internalized meanings ascribed to sodomy in his satirical *Reformasi Aptitude Test.* Asking the question "Who is Anwar Ibrahim?" he satirically characterised Anwar as "a traitorous, adulterous sodomite under the pay of foreigners, out to recolonise us and he should be beaten up and put behind bars for the rest of his life!"[51] In both Mahathir and Zain's readings, sodomy emerges as a category imbued with profoundly political and international meanings, encompassing ideas of foreign interference, Western economic globalization and internal political dissent. Don Miller reminds us, in his study on politics and metaphor, that "metaphor is about words…that is, when words are not used in their proper sense, with their normal and correct meaning; when words are used with cunning, deviantly, with deliberate ambiguity".[52] It is the indistinct and often ambiguous metaphoric meanings that

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[49] This is only a brief summary of the events of 1998-1999 in Malaysia. For fuller accounts, see: Hilley, *Malaysia: Mahathirism, Hegemony and the New Opposition*, Khoo Boo Teik, *Beyond Mahathir: Malaysian Politics and Its Discontents* (London and New York: Zed Books Ltd, 2003), Jason P. Abbott, "Bittersweet Victory: The 1999 Malaysian General Election and the Anwar Ibrahim Affair," *The Round Table* 354 (2000), Raja Petra Kamarudin, *The Reformasi Trail* (Malaysia: Raja Petra Kamarudin, 2001), Sabri Zain, *Face Off: A Malaysian Reformasi Diary (1998-99)* (Singapore: BigO Books, 2000), Ranjit Gill, *Anwar Ibrahim, Mahathir's Dilemma: A Blow-by Blow Account of the Sacking of Anwar Ibrahim, His Dismissal from UMNO and the Launch of His Reform Movement* (Singapore: Epic Management Services Pte Ltd, 1998), Ian Stewart, *The Mahathir Legacy: A Nation Divided, a Region at Risk* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2003).
[50] Mahathir Mohamad, as cited in Gill, *Anwar Ibrahim, Mahathir's Dilemma*, 66-67.
[51] Zain, *Face Off: A Malaysian Reformasi Diary (1998-99)*, 166.
[52] Donald F. Miller, *The Reason of Metaphor: A Study in Politics* (New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, 1992), 31.

coalesced around the category of sodomy in Malaysia during the late 1990s that will occupy my attention in the latter part of this paper.

When it comes to studies of the international, theory building has always relied heavily on the use of metaphor.[53] While the education of disciplinary international relations has often seen students acting out metaphorical readings of the international order (such as the well-known and much criticized prisoner's dilemma[54]), the understandings gleaned from these readings have been used primarily to shore up existing schools of thinking and to reinforce disciplinary assumptions about the nature of international systems.[55] Yet it seems to me that engaging directly with the nature of metaphoric understanding, and broadening the range of metaphors utilized within studies of the international, could promote reflection on the deficiencies of existing models, as well as enable new readings of the processes of international change and exchange. Most obviously, this suggests an examination of the role that metaphors play in the political rhetoric used to describe or invoke the international. According to Tilley, a "great politician is, of necessity, a master of metaphor".[56] This can be seen in the rhetoric of sodomy espoused by Malaysian leaders such as Mahathir, much of which was imbued with both international meanings and Malaysian cultural references.

But this is to be expected. Metaphors enable comparisons to be drawn, and similarities identified, between sets of disparate materials, events or phenomena. Naomi Quinn argues that "metaphorical systems or productive metaphors typically do not structure understandings de novo. Rather, particular metaphors are selected by speakers, just because they provide satisfying mappings onto already existing cultural understandings."[57] This cultural specificity also means that metaphoric understanding acts as a powerful signifier of membership in a community of shared values and understanding: understanding metaphor in the same way acts powerfully to create and maintain bonds of social cohesion. Similarly, a lack of metaphoric understanding – or even a difference in

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[53] Michael P. Marks, "The Prison as Metaphor: Recasting The "Dilemma" Of International Relations," *Alternatives* 26 (2001): 350.

[54] See, for instance, L. H. M. Ling, *Postcolonial International Relations: Conquest and Desire between Asia and the West* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 15-20.

[55] A good example of this is Marks' article in which he argues passionately for improvements to the use of the prison as metaphor in international relations in order to more accurately capture the nuances of the contemporary inter-state system: Marks, "The Prison as Metaphor."

[56] Christopher Tilley, *Metaphor and Material Culture* (Oxford and Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 9. See also: Ong Siow Heng and Nirmala Govindasamy-Ong, *Metaphor and Public Communication: Selected Speeches of Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Chok Tong* (Singapore: Graham Brash Pte Ltd, 1996).

[57] Naomi Quinn, "The Cultural Basis of Metaphor," in *Beyond Metaphor: The Theory of Tropes in Anthropology*, ed. James W. Fernandez (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 65.

metaphoric understanding – can act to code individuals or groups as fundamentally other. These forms of analysis become signally important when considering the continuing references to Malaysian shared cultural values as well as the perceived commonality of understanding around the metaphoric meanings of sodomy during the Anwar Ibrahim affair.

More provocatively, recent work has suggested that metaphors provide a corporeal and personally experienced connection to issues, events or knowledges; a connection that otherwise would not occur. Marks has argued that "[m]etaphors resonate with the human experience because they are encountered in the flesh…To have their greatest impact, these understandings must accord with the *lived experiences* of real people."[58] This personal experience of metaphoric impact has been paid insufficient attention by scholars of the international. Examining the metaphorical meanings attached to the category of sodomy in contemporary Malaysia, for instance, leads one directly into the province of the everyday: to readings of the ways in which ideas about international processes, globalization and cultural change are consumed, understood, debated or resisted in day-to-day life – and of the ways in which conceptions of the everyday and of sexuality itself are reshaped through their imbrication in this process. This process must begin with the simple, yet often controversial, acknowledgement of the importance of materials from the everyday to international studies. In earlier chapters, I argued this point with respect to bringing materials on gender into dialogue with theories of the international, asserting that gender's utility is in part due to the fact that it draws the attention of students of the international both to personal experience and to the cultures of everyday life. This is relevant to issues of sexuality, and more specifically, to discourses of sodomy: both can serve to give very different renderings of both contemporary society and of the international. The ways in which sexuality is constructed and the discourses that inhabit and surround it ensure that sexuality becomes a key site where political, social, and cultural meanings are created, expressed and debated.[59]

But the attempt to build out from the personal to the international must also confront issues of method: how do we begin to tell the stories about everyday understandings of issues like sexuality, or of a series of events such as the Anwar Ibrahim affair? Significant attention has been paid to the ways in which the processes and artefacts of the everyday are transformed into materials deemed suitable for academic description and interpretation. Those working in this area have

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[58] Marks, "The Prison as Metaphor," 350. Original emphasis.
[59] Sanjay Srivastava, *Sexual Sites, Seminal Attitudes: Sexualities, Masculinities and Culture in South Asia* (New Delhi, Thousand Oaks and London: Sage Publications, 2004), 25.

cautioned that it is very easy for everyday materials to lose their particularity as a result of disciplinary incorporation.[60] In this regard, academics working in both postcolonial and international studies have much to learn from our colleagues in anthropology, ethnology or sociology. In my introductory section, I raised anthropologist Gyanendra Pandey's work on communal violence in India. Pandey has suggested that materials from everyday life have the ability to disrupt the totalizing tendencies and claims to panoptic viewpoint that characterize most official accounts of Hindu-Muslim violence and calls for an approach to both theory making and story-telling that emphasizes the fragmentary nature of the materials used.[61] His work is an explicit challenge for researchers to embrace a wider variety of source materials. Many of the sources I draw upon in this chapter – including those from Mahathir himself - may be read in the manner Pandey suggests: as fragments of broader narratives of Malaysian life. Many of these fragments are drawn not just from academic accounts but also from novels, Internet web pages, interviews, journalism and personal accounts. They originate from both supporters and critics of the Malaysian government's treatment of Anwar. Read together, it seems to me, these fragments from late 1990s Malaysia suggest the contours of an alternative approach to reading, and to theorizing the international, one that is fundamentally moored in the cultures and politics of everyday life and that gains its analytical purchase from the various meanings that are deployed and consumed when sexuality comes to stand as a metaphor for the international.

One of the first, and most clearly identifiable, metaphoric meanings circulating in relation to the Anwar case was that of asserting nationalistic difference. As I have already discussed, homosexuality has long been used to reinforce the ethnosexual boundary between the West and the non-Western world. The ambiguous patterning of this boundary and of the intercultural dialogues it shapes can be seen in the seemingly contradictory process whereby homosexuals, among the most demonised and marginalised in metropolitan cultures, have been depicted within postcolonial nationalisms as emblematic of the supposed temptations and dangers of Westernisation.[62] In this regard sexuality's discursive power could be said to derive from the tensions apparent within the very sexual act itself, an act in which the parties seek to embrace, join with, or arguably even

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[60] Ben Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2002), 17-32.
[61] Gyanendra Pandey, "In Defense of the Fragment: Writing About Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today," *Representations* 37 (1992): 50.
[62] Fiona Nicoll, "Postcolonial Nationalisms and the Problem of Heterosexual Whiteness," Remembering/Forgetting: Writing Histories in Asia, Australia and the Pacific - Trans/forming Cultures Winter School, University of Technology, Sydney, http://www.transforming.cultures.uts.edu.au/conferences/remembering/nicoll1.htm.

become the other, but also an act which necessarily relies on (and reinforces) a clear distinction between the self and its other.[63] In both international and sexual terms, this is immediately reminiscent of Bhabha's analysis of the ambivalence of colonial discourse and the fear and fascination that characterized Europe's interaction with its colonial other.[64]

Yet placing sodomy in the analytical frame broadens these conceptions from the mere act of sex to include issues of sexual and moral legitimacy. In the Malaysian case we have already seen that sodomy has figured as a key factor in discourses of cultural otherness, with both European and Malayan/Malaysian accounts (by figures such as Alexander Hamilton, Hugh Clifford and Mahathir Mohamad) using the existence of homosexuality and sodomy as a distinguishing criterion between Malay society and the West. Yet the historical and ongoing presence of sodomy in both cultures and societies (and even their shared scriptural acknowledgment of the possibility of sodomy) calls such neat divisions into question. Here, the sameness in sexual practice between the two societies can perhaps explain more about the need to assert difference in sexual morality than can any supposed dissimilarity. Recent work by Ghassan Hage has termed the fear of sameness "homoiophobia" arguing that "what is really feared here is not the otherness of the other but the other's human sameness—not xenophobia but homoiophobia".[65] Similarly, Ashis Nandy has suggested that the potential for conflict emerges most strongly between groups and societies with much in common, where the conflict operates as a way of creating, asserting and maintaining difference. Examining ethnic conflicts in India and Rwanda, Nandy has argued that conflicts occur "when the two communities involved are not distant strangers, but close to each other culturally and socially, and when their lives intersect at many points. When nearness sours or explodes it releases strange, fearsome demons."[66]

Reading discourses of sodomy in this way helps explain the connection, extant since the earliest colonial interactions between Malaya and the West, between issues of sodomy and the international. As Goldberg has argued, the home of sodomy is always elsewhere: sodomy is always portrayed as incapable of domestication.[67] Thus, painting the natural home of the sodomite as intrinsically external sheds light on many of the reasons given to justify Anwar Ibrahim's removal

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[63] I am grateful to Devika Goonewardene for drawing this point to my attention.

[64] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 85-92.

[65] Ghassan Hage, ""Comes a Time We Are All Enthusiasm": Understanding Palestinian Suicide Bombers in Times of Exighophobia," *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 88.

[66] Ashis Nandy, "Obituary of a Culture," Seminar, http://www.india-seminar.com/2002/513/513%20ashis%20nandy.htm.

[67] Goldberg, *Sodometries*, xvi.

from power. Many of these had to do with the incompatibility between Anwar's supposed sodomitical identity and practice and his position as a Malaysian political and Islamic religious leader. It is possible to see how, through being labeled as sodomite, Anwar was effectively "else-whered": removed from both political life and eventually, via public shaming and imprisonment, from everyday Malaysian life. In this way, the discourse of sodomy can be seen to have made Anwar the subject of the very juridical definitions and limitations that Foucault identified in *The History of Sexuality*.

> As defined by the ancient civil and canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them…Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions[68]

If this is indeed the case, once labeled a sodomite, Anwar Ibrahim could never be anything *but* a sodomite: the metaphoric meanings of sodomy evident in all of his policies, actions and behavior. LHM Ling develops this theme by analyzing the masculine technologies of self that Mahathir has sought to engender within contemporary Malaysia and bringing them to bear within an international frame. She argues that global dialogues of hypermasculinities are the key to understanding the issues that occurred in Malaysia. According to her analysis, Mahathir's actions are explainable as a reaction to a liberal international order, which had criticised both his authoritarian governance of Malaysia as well as his rejection of the supposedly rational economic solutions to the currency crisis that were proffered by institutions such as the International Monetary Fund. In rejecting these solutions by instead instituting a successful policy of currency controls and reaffirming (rather than resiling from) his strict control of Malaysian affairs by targeting his rival Anwar with allegations of sodomy, Mahathir asserted his own hypermasculinity, both to the international order and to domestic political cultures.[69]

Here it is possible to see that within Malaysian society and political culture, Anwar's support for neoliberal international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, and his resistance to Mahathir's policy of currency controls, could be linked to, and even explained by, the presumed Western values, ideologies and even politics that now constituted his imposed identity as a sodomite. Far from entailing mere loss of prestige or moral credibility, being subjected to such

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[68] Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 43.
[69] L. H. M. Ling, "Cultural Chauvinism and the Liberal International Order: "West versus Rest" In Asia's Financial Crisis," in *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender and Class*, ed. Geeta Chowdhry and Sheila Nair (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 132.

metaphorical meanings coded Anwar's identity, politics and loyalty to party and country as questionable, even traitorous. These multiple and often opaque meanings have long been ascribed to sodomy. In his reading of European renaissance discourses of sodomy, Goldberg identifies both issues of personal immorality, falsity, and degeneracy and ideas of national betrayal, questionable loyalty, and belonging intrinsically to the nation's other as all simultaneously finding expression within the categories of sodomy and the sodomite.[70] It is perhaps this all-encompassing nature of sodomitical identity that may explain why many of the moves by supporters to rehabilitate the imprisoned Anwar as a Malaysian leader for the future have centred on asserting both the impossibility of his sodomy and his intrinsic heterosexuality. Both Anwar's wife, Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, the leader of the *Pergerakan Keadilan Sosial* (Social Justice Party), which was formed to take forward the agenda of *reformasi,* and his daughter, Nurul Izzah, have been quick to distance themselves from being seen to support homosexual rights within Malaysia. In words that partly echo Mahathir himself, Nurul Izzah has stated: "You have to understand, in Islam it is wrong. Sodomy is wrong. But it is worse still when you actually allege someone to have committed a sodomy act… my father was a Moslem leader, and it was a great onslaught against his character being alleged to have had committed a sodomy act."[71]

Religious and social disquiet over the perceived negative influences of sodomy on the Malaysian nation was perhaps best captured in the founding document of *Pergerakan Sukarela Rakyat Anti-Homoseksual* (PASRAH) or the People's Anti-Homosexual Volunteer Movement, a pro-government grassroots organization founded in the wake of Anwar's arrest and detention. Its manifesto, which restated many of the publicly circulating understandings of sodomy being sinful and against Islamic teachings, culturally inappropriate, and threatening to the nation's social stability, concluded by arguing that the " stated that the "sentencing of two persons guilty of sodomy recently and the likelihood that many more will be sentenced shows that the homosexual problem in Malaysia has reached a dangerous level."[72]

As I have already shown, Mahathir has been quick to conflate issues of Western cultural contamination, moral degeneracy, and economic decline with the existence of sodomy and the figure of the sodomite. The PASRAH statement itself is a child of that lineage – revealing some of

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[70] Goldberg, *Sodometries,* xv-xvi. [Original emphasis].
[71] Richard S. Ehrlich, "Her Father's Daughter," *The Laissez Faire City Times,* 29 May 2000. See also, Richard S. Ehrlich, "Anwar's Wife," *The Laissez Faire City Times,* 2 November 1998.
[72] Alina Rastam, "Out of the Closet and into the Courtroom: The Pasrah Statement," http://www.saksi.com/pasrah.htm.

the ways in which fears about external influences on Malaysian life can be attributed to as few as two instances of sodomy convictions. Olivia Khoo has explored these metaphoric linkages in her analysis of Internet responses to Anwar's arrest and trial where she argues that "sodomy began to operate as a sign…In this case it promoted Anwar as a representative of the New Asia, one that was being transformed (corrupted according to Mahathir) by Western influence."[73] Khoo has also explored the ways in which the Anwar Ibrahim trials simultaneously made issues of homosexuality within Malaysian society visible, while contributing to the silencing of attempts to bring about social acceptance of homosexuality or the decriminalization of sodomy.[74] The PASRAH group itself was very short-lived, and was denounced by the Malaysian human rights organization SUARAM, and Mahathir's own daughter, Marina Mahathir, who heads the Malaysian AIDS Council.[75] Yet similar sentiments, which continue to present Anwar's presumed sodomy as linked to immorality, Westernization and treason against the Malaysian state, are still evident on a number of Internet sites, one of which carries the following message next to a picture of Anwar in prison garb and with the black eye from his 1998 prison beating still apparent:

> This is the picture of a convicted corruptor and sodomist in Malaysia. Another high profile politician turned convict. Incarcerated for a total of fifteen years until 2014 for the crimes he committed as proven in a court of law. Malaysians from all walks of life are now safe and free from his ambitious plan to take over and rule the country under the commands of his puppet masters and zionists from the West. [*sic*][76]

Beyond cyberspace, similar understandings can be seen as lying behind the actions of the enforcement officers of Malaysia's Islamic Affairs Department (who have the power to arrest Muslims suspected of breaking Islamic law). In 1998, 111 individuals were detained for "attempting to commit homosexual acts." Interviewed by *Time* magazine, the director of the Department described homosexuality as a "crime worse than murder" and went on to assert that "God did not make them this way. This is all Western influence".[77]

As I have argued, there are both clear demarcations and significant similarities between the sorts of messages being publicized by groups such as PASRAH and those being so energetically

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[73] Oliva Khoo, "Sexing the City: Malaysia's New "Cyberlaws" And Cyberjaya's Queer Success," in *Mobile Cultures: New Media in Queer Asia*, ed. Chris Berry, Fran Martin, and Audrey Yue (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 231.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Tet Sieu Choong and Santha Oorjitham, "A Subject Too Hot to Handle: An Anti-Gay Movement Quickly Loses Steam," Asiaweek, http://www.asiaweek.com/asiaweek/98/1113/cs2.html.
[76] "Freedom Malaysia," http://www.geocities.com/freedom_malaysia/.
[77] Mageswary Ramakrishnan, "Homosexuality Is a Crime Worse Than Murder: Interview with Malaysia's Morality Police," Time Asia, http://www.time.com/time/asia/features/interviews/2000/09/26/int.malay.gay2.html.

propounded by Anwar's supporters. But there is another way in which the camps are perhaps not as distinct as might first appear. On both sides of the political debate there is a feeling that perhaps things have gone too far. The processes of public shaming, of open discussion of sexual immorality, and of supposedly private matters (both in terms of sexuality and power struggles being national leaders) being aired and resolved publicly have not been popular with Malaysian citizens. There is a sense that irreparable damage may have been done to the nation's reputation, its social and religious fabric, and its public life. Within Malaysian public opinion, Sardar writes, "the messages…all tell the same tale: this is not what our culture is, this is not Islamic, this is not what Malaysia should be."[78] Both the accuser and not the accused may well have become subject to the metaphoric meanings that circulate around sodomy, labelled and defined as deviant, anti-patriotic and irreligious.

Alina Rastam, writing in support of sexuality rights in Malaysia, has expressed views that accord with such analyses. Emphasising the effect of the Anwar trial on Malaysia's young, she argues that the widespread press coverage and social debates surrounding the trial publicly highlighted not just the nature of Anwar's alleged crimes but also gave Malaysians of all ages and from all walks of life "some idea, therefore, that straight or heterosexual sex is not the only mode of sexual expression."[79] In the breaking of what had been a well-established taboo on public discussion of homosexuality in Malaysia, light has also been shed on the ways in which both politics and sexuality in Malaysia have been, and continue to be, shaped by the global circulation of people, ideas and identities. Most obvious has been the emergence of visible and assertive Malaysian homosexual identities. Several Malaysian gay men have even argued that Anwar's sodomy trial, by making the issue public, led to a larger number of men experimenting with homosex and sodomy.[80] Indeed, much of the international response to the events surrounding Anwar's detention and trial took the form of criticisms of the lack of both sexuality rights and civil and political rights in Malaysia. Thus the Anwar Ibrahim affair, given its explicit referencing of categories of sexual acts as well as its processing through Western-style jurisprudential bodies such as the Malaysian civil court system, provided outside critics with many opportunities to comment on issues such as sexuality

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[78] Sardar, *The Consumption of Kuala Lumpur*, 221.
[79] Alina Rastam, "Out of the Closet and into the Courtroom: Some Reflections on Sexuality Rights in Malaysia," http://www.saksi.com/alina.htm.
[80] Mageswary Ramakrishnan, "Coming Out in the Open," *Time International*, 2 October 2000, Mel Ayu, "Was I Born to Be This Way? The Thoughts of a Muslim Gay in an Oppressed Society," http://gayreading.com/lifestyles/muslim.html, Mageswary Ramakrishnan, "During the Anwar Trial It Was Easy to Get Lucky: Interview with Openly Gay Journalist Ashley Lee," Time Asia, http://www.time.com/time/asia/features/interviews/2000/09/26/int.malay.gay1.html.

rights, the decriminalization of sodomy, rights to a fair trial and of course the continued existence of detention without trial under the Internal Security Act. Khoo has examined this interface between sexual and political activism in Malaysia in her work on the medium of the Internet, arguing that, in some ways, support for Anwar helped fuel calls for greater liberalisation and community activism within Malaysian society. She presents the widespread Malaysian political organisation occurring on the Internet in support of Anwar Ibrahim and *reformasi* (primarily through the medium of websites hosted offshore to avoid Malaysian censorship and information technology laws), as well as the emerging visibility of Malaysian gay, lesbian, and queer subcultures as challenging Mahathir's panoptic vision for Malaysia's future. [81]

One way of analyzing these emergent protest movements is to examine the ways in which the deployment and consumption of discourses of sodomy have acted to impel rethinking, or even give rise to substantive change, in other areas of Malaysian political and social life. Unquestionably, issues of homosexuality and the metaphorical meanings attached to them are now established as part of political discourse in Malaysia. But it is also significant that issues of sexual difference do not seem to have the same capacity to shock, or even to carry the metaphoric meanings they did prior to the allegations against Anwar. In 2002, Khalid Jafri, the by now notorious author of *50 Reasons why Anwar Cannot Become Prime Minister*, raised allegations in a tabloid newspaper that the head of the *Puteri UMNO* (UMNO Women's Youth Wing), Azalina Othman Said, was a lesbian. While the issue did not seem to damage Azalina's career (she continued as head of *Puteri UMNO* until June 2004), it prompted much interest in cyberspace, with one internet group hosting a discussion under the title "Are all of Malaysia's Politicians Gay?" in which one contributor mused that as soon as a Malaysian politician gained popularity it appeared inevitable that someone would accuse him or her of being either a bad Muslim or a homosexual.[82]

This sense of a change in the parameters of public debate in Malaysia was best captured by a controversial development in Malaysian literary politics, that emerged in the wake of the Anwar Ibrahim affair. In 1999, one of the most distinguished Malaysian authors, and a former National Laureate, Professor Shahnon Ahmad published a short book entitled *Shit @ PukiMak @ PM*.[83] *PukiMak* is a common vulgar expression for the female genitalia, often shortened to P.M. (which in

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[81] Khoo, "Sexing the City," 234-35.
[82] Auizuddin Danian, "Are All of Malaysia's Politicians Gay?," http://www.aizuddindanian.com/voi/archives/000088.html.
[83] Shahnon Ahmad, *Shit @ PukiMak @ PM* (Kubang Kerian: Pustaka Reka, 1999).

both English and Malay is an abbreviation for "Prime Minister"). The novel uses the metaphor of the bowels to describe Malaysian politics, basing its storyline around the fact that in the human digestive system, excrement needs to be expelled for the body to remain healthy. The narrative is peopled by fictional pieces of excrement, one of which, variously called *Kepala Taik* (Shit Head) or *PukiMak* is lodged close to the rectum and is refusing to be passed out. Thus the bowels (the metaphoric political system) have begun to become more and more foul smelling as this piece of excrement gathers other types of excrement to its cause in a *Barisan Shit* (Shit Front).[84] As one reviewer explains, "[r]ather than follow the course of nature and be passed out, they…[bred] a culture of foulness and disease…including corruption, hunger for power, slander and sodomy."[85] The action of *Shit* centers on the actions of yet another lump of excrement called *Wirawan* (Hero) who attempts to bring about change within the bowels before falling victim to a plot spearheaded by *Kepala Taik* which sees him expelled from the bowels entirely. On his expulsion, he is cleansed by the purifying action of the outside air and water and is acclaimed by the people as a new leader, who goes on to defeat the forces of *PukiMak/Kepala Taik* and to restore health and order.[86]

   Shit was a best-seller, with all fifteen thousand copies of the first printing sold out in just two weeks and many more illicit copies printed and sold in markets across Malaysia. It is of course, obvious that the Shit Head of the novel is a thinly disguised representation of Mahathir, with the *Barisan Shit* referencing the coalition *Barisan Nasional* of which UMNO is a leading member. The connection between the *Wirawan* character and Anwar Ibrahim is also apparent. The novel was wildly controversial – for its subject matter, for appearing to overtly criticize the government, and for the fact that it was written by such a distinguished Malay scholar. Farish A. Noor argues that the publication of the novel is evidence of a major change in framing and conduct of Malaysian political debate.

> Shanon Ahmad's *Shit* has brought into the open the hidden and unspoken narrative of anger, frustration and dissent that has been simmering in the hearts of many Malaysians and Malays in particular over the years. Once opened, the floodgates cannot be closed. Shanon's book may mark a descent to hitherto unheard of depths in crude and vulgar writing, but it has also shifted the standards of the Malay canon to a radical new register.[87]

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[84] Farish A. Noor, "From the '*Taj Us-Salatin*' to Shanon Ahmad's '*Shit*': Malay Political Discourse Leaps to a Radical New Register," http://www.just-international.com/Art_Farish.html.

[85] Jason P. Abbott, "A Foul Smelling Affair," *The World Today* 55, no. 7 (1999): 22.

[86] Amir Muhammad, "Raising a Stink: Shahnon Ahmad's Satire Outrages the Malaysian Establishment," *AsiaWeek*, 7 May 1999.

[87] Noor, "From the '*Taj Us-Salatin*' to Shanon Ahmad's '*Shit*'."

The publication of *Shit* is also significant in that it provides an insight to the conservative Muslim response to the events surrounding the arrest and trial of Anwar Ibrahim. Politically, the author is a supporter of the Islamist *Parti Islam SeMalaysia* (PAS) the major opposition to UMNO; Shahnon himself contested and won the parliamentary seat of Sik, in the state of Kedah for PAS during the first elections following the detention of Anwar Ibrahim. If the events narrated in *Shit* give an insight to his thinking then it must be regarded as significant that a leading Muslim and national figure such as Shahnon, far from seeing Anwar as irredeemably corrupted by the allegations of sodomy, still sees the former politician as a future leader who may be able to challenge UMNO's political hegemony and bring about political reform.

It seems clear that in late 1990s Malaysia, discourses of sodomy somehow became entwined with the debates over the impact of globalization, Westernization and postcolonial strategies of resistance. But how can this process best be explained? What is, perhaps the most productive line of enquiry is to ask how the figure of Anwar Ibrahim – disgraced former politician, leader of a popular reformist political movement and convicted sodomite – came to stand for, and humanize, many of the fears that Malaysians (both his supporters and his detractors) held over issues such as local political reform, nationalism, Westernization and globalization? I am reminded here of the work that John and Jean Comaroff have done on violence against practitioners of witchcraft and occult beliefs in South Africa, where they argue that "[b]ecause witches distill complex material and social processes into comprehensible human motives…they tend to figure in narratives that tie translocal processes to local events, that map translocal scenes onto local landscapes, that translate translocal discourses into local vocabularies of cause and effect."[88]

Substitute the term "sodomite" for that of "witch" in the Comaroffs' analysis and its applicability to the events surrounding the Anwar case becomes apparent. The metaphoricity of sodomy, mapped onto the figure of Anwar Ibrahim provided Malaysians – whether supporters of Anwar or of Mahathir – with a set of intellectual tools and discursive meanings by which to make sense of far broader issues surrounding the impact of global and national change and exchange. The Comaroffs have discussed how members of the polity are dissociated from political processes and political agency in an age of global capital. I believe that the Anwar Ibrahim case provides a clear example of just how issues of sexuality can act to ground and make comprehensible formerly

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[88] Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, "Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: Notes from the South African Postcolony," *American Ethnologist* 26, no. 2 (1999): 286.

impenetrable political processes – and in ways that are both intensely personal and locally specific. It provides a window into the ways in which everyday Malaysian life continually references, consumes, resists or embraces international flows and the ways in which sexuality is one of the first categories to which individuals turn in order to process their understandings of those flows and their effects on Malaysian culture and society. It is this process which the Comaroffs have explored in their attempts to move beyond the feminist assertion that the personal is political. Even more, they argue, the personal emerges as "the only politics there is, the only politics with a tangible referent or emotional valence. By extension, *inter*personal relations – above all sexuality… – come to stand, metonymically, for the inchoate forces that threaten the world as we know it."[89]

If sexuality can come to stand for the forces that threaten a sense of being in the new global capitalist order, how much more so can sodomy, inscribed with both locally specific and globally circulating, cultural, moral, and scriptural metaphoric meanings? And might not such threats gain added political potency from the very confusions and contradictions that inhabit the metaphor of sodomy? As Kant reminds us, metaphors can provoke us to thought, without, however, clearly delineating the nature of directions of such thought. As he would have it, metaphoric understandings, more often than not, "cannot be completely compassed and made intelligible by language".[90]

Sodomy allows much to be said; it resonates with profoundly internationalized and morally imbued categories. But, to follow Kant's formulation, it also allows much to remain unsaid, to remain cloaked (to borrow Sardar's phrase) "in the impenetrable gloom of metaphor."[91] This fact, perhaps more than any other, explains both the attractiveness of sodomy as a tool in the rhetorical arsenal of the postcolonial leader and its power in the cultural unconscious of the postcolonial polity. Yet sodomy is not without its dangers. To deploy sodomy is to unleash a wide range of metaphoric meanings and concepts within public debate. The metaphor of sodomy names the unnameable, challenges the political and moral hegemony of the West, and provides an explanation for the fears and hopes of both citizens and elites as they negotiate their place in a globalized world. Just as much, though, it acts as a powerful engine of social and cultural change, mobilizing social forces, providing a rallying point for internal dissent and even offering new ways

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[89] Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, "Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming," *Public Culture* 12, no. 2 (2000): 305.

[90] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement* (New York: Hafner Press, 1951), 157.

[91] Sardar, *The Consumption of Kuala Lumpur*, 190.

of reading and understanding the ways in which local societies relate to the international. The profoundly personalized responses to the metaphoric meanings of sodomy suggest new ways of examining the politics of globalization and challenge scholars to embrace a wider range of sources, materials and approaches in their studies of the international

The Queer Identities of "Asia's World City"

> *[S]pace has both a metaphorical and a real element; the material interacts with the subjective, the imaginary with the geographic. Temporal factors…are integral to spatiality. The global and the local form a nexus: It is not merely a matter of place as the manifestation of the local giving substance to an empty global space. The local is always implicated in the global (and vice-versa), and various in-between sites exist that are constitutive of difference and adaptations, mostly unpredictable and unintended. Indeed, the spaces opened up at the local-global intersection allow for a mapping of some of the central concerns in identity politics: resistance, difference, agency.*[1]

> *- Albert J Paolini*

A linked system of outdoor escalators and moving footpaths rises from between the skyscrapers of Hong Kong's business heart in Central, through the upmarket shops, restaurants and bars of the SoHo district, to the exclusive residential areas of Mid-Levels, nestled against the sides of the Hong Kong Peak. Riding the Central - Mid-Levels Escalator, the traveller is transported from open fronted stores and restaurants on narrow streets, past second and third storey windows of local businesses, multinational restaurant chains, public housing blocks as well as brand new residential apartments and gleaming commercial premises, before being deposited at street level once again for the next phase of their journey. Examining Hong Kong spatialities, Gutierrez and Portefaix, have identified the singular spatial experience that the Escalator inscribes on and of the city: its creation of a distinctive vision of Hong Kong life for viewing and consumption.

> The escalator's path…is not a straight line engraved concurrently with the slope, but rather a split inscribed in the topography…The numerous stops, as well as entrances and exits inscribe the intervals, which give rhythm to the duration of the journey…Through its dynamic the Escalator is a vectorial image that travels from one segment to another and from where the city appears and disappears according to its crossed layers. Along its way, it opens and closes on ordinary scenes of daily life, which are played successively by the same actors and spectators.[2]

Like most technologies of modernity, the Escalator has been given meaning in both public and unofficial contexts. The Escalator features on many tourist itineraries as an attraction in its own right, but it is foremost a transit system for local workers and residents managing life on the hilly

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[1] Albert J. Paolini, *Navigating Modernity: Postcolonialism, Identity and International Relations* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 206.

[2] Laurent Gutierrez and Valérie Portefaix, *Mapping Hong Kong*, ed. Anna Koor (Hong Kong: Map Book, 2000), 4/11.

terrain of Hong Kong island.[3] Yet its celebrated place as an icon of central Hong Kong's urban landscape, a drawing card for foreign tourists and a convenience for the territory's workers and residents is only one of the meanings which circulate around this particular spatial phenomenon.

I commence my arguments here by referring to another of the meanings attached to this traversal of urban space. For the Central – Mid-Levels Escalator is not merely a transit system or a platform for viewing the nature of contemporary Asian urbanism.[4] It also inscribes a series of *sexual* meanings onto the Hong Kong landscape: meanings that are both local and globalised at the same time. For those alert to – or initiated in – the sexual narratives that circulate around the Escalator, a trip on its moving stairs and walkways is rich in sexual references and possibilities. Until recently, the Escalator's climb has passed the prominent signage of Fetish Fashion, a specialist store which for many years provided its patrons with sex toys, fetish-themed clothing and a suite of sexual play-spaces themed as dungeons.[5] Close by, under the Escalator, are a number of bars and discotheques catering to a gay and lesbian clientele. The area was also the primary setting for *Bishonen,* a Hong Kong film whose storyline explores male homosexual prostitution, same-sex male relationships and the impact of homosexuality on Chinese family dynamics and obligations.[6] The Escalator features on a two-day tourist itinerary aimed at visiting gay and lesbian tourists; brochures detailing the itinerary can be picked up at gay and lesbian venues in the area and a guided tour service is available from a specialist gay and lesbian travel company.[7] In 2002, the Hong Kong Tourism Commission awarded this itinerary an Honourable Mention prize in a territory-wide competition designed to spur the creation of specialist itineraries for diverse groups of foreign tourists. This underlines the centrality of the area, both to Hong Kong's emerging homosexual subcultures and to broader attempts to situate Hong Kong – "Asia's World City" as the territory's international branding efforts would have it – as a space of cosmopolitanism and diversity.[8]

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[3] See, eg: Hong Kong Tourism Board, "Hong Kong Walks: Central & Western District - Travel through Time," Hong Kong Tourism Board, http://www.discoverhongkong.com/eng/touring/hkwalks/ta_walk_walk1.jhtml.

[4] For more on the significance of transit systems for the consumption of Asian city-spaces see: William Siew Wai Lim, *Alternatives in Transition: The Postmodern, Glocality and Social Justice* (Singapore: Select Books, 2001), 98-103, William Siew Wai Lim, *Asian New Urbanism and Other Papers* (Singapore: Select Books, 1998), 156-63.

[5] See: "Fetish Fashion," Fetish Fashion, http://www.fetishfashion.com.hk/home.htm. See also: Brian Bennett, "Tough Love," *Time Asia*, 19 March 2001.

[6] Yonfan, "Bishonen (Mei Shaonian Zhi Lian)," (Hong Kong: Far Sun Film Company Ltd and Victor Company of Japan Ltd (JVC), 1998).

[7] Chi Heng Foundation and Chung To, "Enjoy Hong Kong G&L Two-Day Itinerary," Tongzhi Holidays, http://www.tongzhiholidays.com/en/tours-001.shtml.

[8] Chung To, "Lesbian and Gay Travel Officially Recognized: Chi Heng Wins The "Enjoy HK" Itinerary," http://sqzm14.ust.hk/hkgay/news/pink-dollar.html, "Press Release: FS Awards Winners of Tourism Itinerary Design Competition," Economic Development Branch, Economic Development and Labour Bureau: The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, http://www.edlb.gov.hk/edb/eng/papers/press/01062002.htm. For Hong

This intersection of transnational gay and lesbian economies, local homosexual subcultures and the patterning of urban Hong Kong's everyday life owes much to the modes of spatial engagement created by the Escalator. For it does not just act as a platform from which to view various pre-existing spectacles of everyday life. The Escalator also makes "those on the walkway…ordered and specifically regulated"[9] a spectacle in their own right. The various platforms and breaks in the Escalator's path provide convenient views back down the Escalator itself, allowing those so situated to observe the crowds of people riding the system. This has both called into being and maintained a geography of desire, a certain use of space to enable and direct a sexual gaze. Most obviously this is directed to the fulfilment of male homosexual desire through the widespread practise of men – tourists and locals alike - using the Escalator's unique spatial nature to "cruise" for same-sex sexual partners. Cruising, which comprises a repertoire of ritualised covert glancing, overt gazes, subcultural cues and interpersonal behaviour is largely carried out in public space, aimed at signalling one's interest in pursuing (often anonymous) homosexual encounters.[10] Its embeddedness within city-spaces has prompted Mark Turner to explain it as a definitive queer urban practise.[11] So common is this use of the Escalator that a widely known international gay male travel guidebook, has listed the Escalator as one of the key cruising areas of Hong Kong and even omits from its listing the customary warning acronym of "AYOR" (at your own risk).[12]

Reading the Central – Mid-Levels Escalator in this way highlights a number of the issues that structure my arguments in this chapter. The first of these is the role of the city-space – most obviously that of the so-called "global city" – as a conduit between globalizing and transnational flows and local and particular circumstance. To the extent that globalization may be reshaping the world as we experience it, such processes have their first, and perhaps most penetrating, impact in the city-spaces that operate as nodal distributive hubs for flows of global capital, ideology and social change.[13] Secondly, it points to the impact of urban spaces – and of the negotiations of postcolonial

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Kong's self-branding as "Asia's World City" see: Brand Hong Kong Management Office, "The Brand Hong Kong," http://www.brandhk.gov.hk/brandhk/eindex.htm.

[9] Gutierrez and Portefaix, *Mapping Hong Kong*, 4/11.

[10] For more on "cruising" see: David Timothy Aveline, "A Typology of Perceived HIV/AIDS Risk-Reduction Strategies Used by Men Who "Cruise" Other Men for Anonymous Sex," *Journal of Sex Research* 32, no. 3 (1995), Henning Bech, *When Men Meet: Homosexuality and Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), 110-18, R. Tweekbury, "Cruising for Sex in Public Places: The Structure and Language of Men's Hidden, Erotic Worlds," *Deviant Behavior: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 17 (1996).

[11] Mark W Turner, *Backward Glances: Cruising Queer Streets in London and New York* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003).

[12] *Spartacus International Gay Guide 2001/2002*, 30th ed. (Berlin: Bruno Gmünder Verlag GmBH, 2001), 175.

[13] A good overview of the literature on the role of the global city in contemporary globalization is: Allen J. Scott, *Global City-Regions : Trends, Theory, Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). For the functioning of global cities in Asia see: Ryan Bishop, John Phillips, and Wei Wei Yeo, eds., *Postcolonial Urbanism: Southeast Asian Cities and Global Processes* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003).

modernity and global flows that such spaces both require and inform – on the constitution of individual and communal identities. Allied to this are the ways in which both spatialities and identities become key tools with which individuals and groups navigate the challenges of modernity, globalization and difference. Given Hong Kong's definition and ongoing status as a colony, first of Britain and now (arguably) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), materials from Hong Kong also raise questions about the endurance of structures of European colonialism and Westernisation. They can also demonstrate the impact of nationalisms and statehood on the possibilities for everyday forms of dissent, not just against colonial regimes but against broader forces drawing their strength from global flows and contemporary forms of ideological, cultural or even sexual imperialism.[14]

I explore such issues by focussing on the creation and functioning of homosexual identities in contemporary Hong Kong. The two factors I have just identified – the negotiations of external colonial control and the transition from colonial economy to a hub of global capitalism – are the dual influences that shape my chapter's arguments. Hong Kong's unique position as a global city, postcolonial yet perpetually colonised, a densely populated metropolis that simultaneously projects an image of certainty and economic vibrancy to the outside world but continually works over its own projects of urban, cultural and political self-definition, make it an excellent starting point from which to ask questions of broader relevance to the thesis. These include asking how sexual identities factor in the negotiation and definition of international spaces and their politics. What might a focus on sexual identities (as opposed to my previous chapter's concern about a specific sexual act) reveal about the embodied nature of debates over transnational flows of change and new forms of international hegemony? As many scholars have argued, globalization – both in its colonial guise as well as in its more contemporary ideological and economic manifestations – is "identity inducing".[15] Here I read many of the new forms of homosexual identity emerging in Hong Kong as representative of the ways in which identity, the body, and bodily practices, can become sites where international politics and processes of globalization are consumed, resisted and refashioned.[16] My arguments throughout demonstrate how the presence, and modes of functioning,

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[14] On Hong Kong's relationship to structures of colonial control see: Allen Chun, "Colonial 'Govern-Mentality' in Transition: Hong Kong as Imperial Object and Subject," *Cultural Studies* 14, no. 3/4 (2000).

[15] Stephen J. Rosow, "Introduction: Boundaries Crossing - Critical Theories of Global Economy," in *The Global Economy as Political Space*, ed. Stephen J. Rosow, Naeem Inayatullah, and Mark Rupert, Critical Perspectives on World Politics (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), 5.

[16] A suggestive approach to reading globalization in this way is: J.K. Gibson-Graham, "Queer(y)ing Globalization," in *Places through the Body*, ed. Heidi J. Nast and Steve Pile (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

of homosexualities in the Hong Kong environment operate in ways akin to the reading of the Central – Mid-Levels Escalator with which I opened this chapter. Homosexual identities bisect and make visible many of the layers and fault lines of Hong Kong society, its internal social and cultural dynamics and their negotiations with processes of external and transnational change.

The first part of the chapter takes as its subject matter the politics of sovereignty, examining the ways in which British colonial governance and the diplomatic agreements between Britain and Mainland China about the reversion of sovereignty over Hong Kong became intermingled with concerns over homosexual identity. It narrates the developments in Hong Kong society, culture and politics in the latter part of the twentieth century that informed changes both in Hong Kong's projects of self-definition but which also set the stage for the emergence of new forms of homosexual subjectivity and visible, assertive homosexual communities. It is these developments that I turn to in the latter half of the chapter, exploring the ways in which a study of homosexuality in Hong Kong illuminates both a body politics and a cultural politics of homosexuality, in dialogue and resistance with flows of global change and international political developments. Here, my arguments centre more on the social, urban and political transformations brought about by the Hong Kong government's attempts to position the territory for membership in the elite group of global cities. Following on from this, I present three "snapshots" of specific homosexual identities that function in today's globalized Hong Kong, arguing that in each of these cases it is possible to discern the ways in which individual sexed bodies, and sexual subcultures, negotiate processes of international change and articulate particular, and in many cases personal, understandings of the international itself. These three examples make clear the ways in which postcolonial sexual identities operating in Hong Kong are constructed with explicit and implicit reference to spatial circumstance, and are formed in the nexus of colonial histories, globalizing processes and local conditions. But the identities I describe also engage the nub of Paolini's belief (set out in the epigraph to this chapter) that the global/local interaction acts to constitute identities that in turn provide subjects and groups with the agency and conceptual frameworks to negotiate their own places within the globalization of modernity. In the final section of the chapter, I briefly reflect on the broader global processes that delimit such possibilities and explore the relationship between the state and the possibility of sexualised processes of dissent. I advance the argument that explicitly internationalised spaces of compromised or incomplete statehood, such as Hong Kong, offer a wider range of possibilities for the crafting of non-normative sexual, and political, identities

than do the rigidly defined parameters of the postcolonial state. Paradoxically, however, we can detect ways in which these sexualities also hold out the potential to rethink and reform nationalisms, state identity and state behaviour. Throughout the chapter, I am concerned to explore how materials on Chinese homosexualities can provide new vistas on the ways in which the personal and the sexual actively engage with, and help shape, the international.

It makes sense to begin with the connections between Hong Kong's colonial histories and sexual identity. For the most part, Hong Kong has not been known for the diversity of sexual cultures that characterised the twentieth century histories of other Chinese cities shaped by European colonialism. Ackbar Abbas compares Hong Kong with a city with a much longer relationship to European colonialism, Shanghai. He argues that it was Shanghai's simultaneous and often paradoxical relationships with processes of Chinese nationalism and with European (and Japanese) extraterritorial populations that enabled a form of decadent cosmopolitanism, impacting locals and foreigners alike, to emerge in that city prior to the communist revolution of 1949.[17] In the early part of the twentieth century, Shanghai enjoyed the dubious titles of "Paris of Asia" and "brothel of Asia",[18] its diverse sexual subcultures celebrated by Western homosexual travellers such as Christopher Isherwood and WH Auden.[19] Elsewhere, another predominantly Chinese city born of European colonialism, Singapore, was known worldwide for the transvestites of Bugis Street and the easy availability of sex for American and British military personnel on rest and recreation leave.[20] Yet Hong Kong, by comparison, appeared staid and conservative. Abbas ascribes this to a feeling of social and cultural dependency:

> For a long time, Hong Kong did not develop the kind of cosmopolitan culture that Shanghai exhibited in the 1920s and 1930s, a cosmopolitanism that emerged from the anomalous space of extraterritoriality. Dependency meant that for most of its history, Hong Kong, culturally speaking, was caught in the double bind of divided loyalties. It was politically ambivalent about both Britain

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[17] Ackbar Abbas, "Cosmopolitan De-scriptions: Shanghai and Hong Kong," *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (2000): 773-78.

[18] Christian Henriot, *Prostitution and Sexuality in Shanghai: A Social History 1849-1949*, trans. Noël Castelino (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 98. It is important not to characterise the communist revolution of 1949 as causing a complete break with Shanghai's earlier sexual histories. The new market reforms effecting Shanghai sexualities are explored in James Farrer, *Opening Up: Youth Sex Culture and Market Reform in Shanghai* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

[19] W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, *Journey to a War* (London: Faber, 1939), Chapter 10.

[20] This period of Singapore history is captured in Hong Kong director Yonfan's film *Bugis Street*: Yonfan, "Bugis Street (Yao Jie Huang Hou)," (Singapore: 1995).

and China; ambivalent about what language, English or Chinese, it should master; and confident only about capital.[21]

For Abbas these structures of dependency mean that historically Hong Kong has "accepted its colonial status as a priori and turned towards the international" for its identity and purpose.[22] While its sexual cultures may indeed have had aspects of the "louche and lascivious city" described by Jan Morris in her fond portrait of the territory, publicly visible structures such as prostitution and the sexual negotiation of racial and cultural difference were directed primarily to the external and the colonial, with comparatively little impact on local Chinese life worlds.[23] Even the most famous sexualised figure of Hong Kong in the Western imagination, the fictional prostitute Suzie Wong, is a caricature designed to engage the interest of Western Orientalist desire.[24] It would appear to have had comparatively little social or cultural resonance for local Hong Kong Chinese.[25] Indeed, the impact of the turn to the international on broader Hong Kong Chinese sexual self-imaginings in the early part of the twentieth century was arguably far less than that which occurred in either Shanghai or Singapore. For Shanghai it would be Mao's communist revolution that would signal the end (or at least a interregnum) for the city's legendary sexual outgoingness. Similarly, in Singapore, it would be the technocrats of the People's Action Party who would close down and resignify many of the urban spaces where sexual difference had been able to flourish (Bugis Street is best known today for an air-conditioned shopping mall and a subway station). For Hong Kong, simultaneously dependent on largely frozen and reified versions of both Chinese culture and British colonial structures of control, the possibilities of exhibiting or exploring sexual difference were to remain largely foreclosed.

Morris writes of "an ironic element of puritanism", derived from British codes of legal and social regulation, which operated in the Hong Kong of the 1960s and 1970 and attempted to regulate sexual morality and personal behaviour.[26] British anti–sodomy legislation operated in the then colony and punished acts of "gross indecency", including sexual acts between men. For Chinese men especially, the combination of legal prohibition and social and familial expectations

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[21] Abbas, "Cosmopolitan De-scriptions," 777.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Jan Morris, *Hong Kong : The End of an Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 55-57.
[24] Richard Mason, *The World of Suzie Wong* (London: Collins, 1957). A 1960 film of the same name was directed by Richard Quine, "The World of Suzie Wong," (United Kingdom: 1960).
[25] For the figure of Suzie Wong and Western Orientalist depictions of Hong Kong see: Thomas Y. T. Luk and James P. Rice, eds., *Before and after Suzie: Hong Kong in Western Film and Literature* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2002). It is interesting to compare the comparatively limited social impact within Hong Kong of a figure such as Suzie Wong with the social and nationalist prestige accorded by Singaporean society to a similarly Orientalist and externally configured icon, the Singapore Girl, as I explored above.
[26] Morris, *Hong Kong : The End of an Empire*, 228.

operated to limit or deny the range of possibilities for creating discrete homosexual identities. Significantly too, it has been argued that Hong Kong's ambivalence regarding both China and the West, coupled with the development of the colony into a Westernised centre of international banking and trade from the 1960s onwards, worked to *restrict* the possibility of non-normative sexual expression. Explicitly addressing such issues, Petula Ho has argued that:

> Homosexuals, especially male homosexuals, are often seen as both a challenge and a threat to the established norms in a Chinese family and a Chinese society that rests on the supremacy of male roles…To be a man in Hong Kong from the '60s and the '80s (a time of transition from a developing industrial economy into an international financial center) meant limited choice over education, career, courtship and marriage. Any man who deviated from the prescribed range of options would incur disapproval and stigmatization.[27]

In the late 1970s, police operations targeted homosexual and bisexual men under gross indecency laws (these laws did not cover female homosexual acts). This prompted several hundred Hong Kong residents to petition the government for the decriminalisation of homosexual acts. Matters worsened in 1980, over the apparent suicide of a Royal Hong Kong Police Force officer, John MacLennan, found dead when police arrived to arrest him for committing homosexual acts. The matter grew into a public scandal when rumours spread that MacLennan had been murdered to prevent him revealing the homosexuality of senior Hong Kong government officials.[28] To allay public disquiet, throughout the 1980s the Hong Kong administration commissioned a series of law reform reports and consultation papers on sexuality laws, all of which recommended decriminalisation of homosexual acts.[29] Despite this, the colonial government, following negative public opinion from the majority Chinese community regarding homosexuality, decided not to implement the reports' recommendations.[30]

But the debates over the decriminalisation of homosexual acts, and even the preparedness of Hong Kong society to come to terms with sexual difference, were to be reshaped by broader currents of international change effecting Hong Kong. The 1980s bore witness to two events that would fundamentally alter the social, cultural, political and even sexual landscapes of contemporary

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[27] Petula Sik-Ying Ho, "Male Homosexual Identity in Hong Kong: A Social Construction," *Journal of Homosexuality* 29, no. 1 (1995): 72-72.

[28] H. Lethbridge, "Pandora's Box: The Inspector MacLennan Enigma," *Hong Kong Law Journal* 12, no. 1 (1982), Petula Sik-Ying Ho and Adolf Kat-Tat Tsang, "Negotiating Anal Intercourse in Inter-Racial Gay Relationships in Hong Kong," *Sexualities* 3, no. 3 (2000): 303-04.

[29] For an excellent overview of the legal and social events leading to the decriminalisation of homosexual acts in Hong Kong see: Phil C.W. Chan, "The Gay Age of Consent in Hong Kong," *Criminal Law Forum* 15, no. 3 (2004): 277-82.

[30] Carole J. Petersen, "Values in Transition: The Development of the Gay and Lesbian Rights Movement in Hong Kong," *Loyola of Los Angeles International and Comparative Law Review* 19 (1996-1997): 340, Rozanna Lilley, *Staging Hong Kong: Gender and Performance in Transition* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1998), 213-16.

Hong Kong. The first of these was the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, which paved the way for the reversion of sovereignty over Hong Kong from Britain to the People's Republic of China in 1997.[31] The second, five years after the signing of the Joint Declaration was the brutal suppression of 1989's pro-democracy protests in Tiananmen Square, Beijing.[32]

Ackbar Abbas has identified these events as being central to the development – perhaps for the first time in Hong Kong's history – of distinctive, and assertive, Hong Kong identities and cultures. He relates these developments to what he terms a cultural politics of disappearance: awareness that Hong Kong's way of life was transient and threatened by international events beyond the territory's control or influence. Both the Handover of Hong Kong to the communist People's Republic of China, and that state's demonstration of a heavy-handed denial of the right to democratic dissent at Tiananmen cast a shadow of fear and vulnerability over Hong Kong society. This, according to Abbas, prompted an explosion of interest in exploring and defining aspects of Hong Kong's cultural, social and historical specificity.[33] He describes the newly minted Hong Kong culture and identity that emerged at the end of the twentieth century as

> a hothouse plant that appeared at the moment when something was disappearing: a case of love at last sight, a culture of disappearance….[O]ne major anxiety was that the internationalism of the port city would be submerged and smothered by its reinscription into the [Chinese] nation. But the anxiety was tempered by a tacit hope that Hong Kong might indeed be a special case. This was what redirected attention back to the city's local peculiarities, in an attempt to reinvent it one last time even as it disappeared.[34]

Such arguments have fed into the work of a broader group of scholars who have tracked the changes in Hong Kong society and cultural expression brought about by the imminent 1997 Handover and the looming reality of having to negotiate new forms of postcolonial (or differently-colonised) life.[35] These studies have shed new light on the ways in which perceived political and

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[31] For the handover of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty and events leading to it see: Jonathan Dimbleby, *The Last Governor: Chris Patten and the Handover of Hong Kong* (London: Warner Books, 1997), Chris Patten, *East and West: The Last Governor of Hong Kong on Power, Freedom and the Future* (London: Macmillan, 1998), Joel S .K. Poon, ed., *The Making of a Special Administrative Region 1982 - 1997* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Economic Times, 1997).

[32] On Tiananmen see: Craig Calhoun, *Neither Gods nor Emperors: Students and the Struggle for Democracy in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), Chu-Yuan Cheng, *Behind the Tiananmen Massacre: Social, Political, and Economic Ferment in China* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), Peter Li, Steven Mark, and Marjorie H. Li, *Culture and Politics in China : An Anatomy of Tiananmen Square* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991), Trevor Watson, *Tremble and Obey : An ABC Correspondent's Account of the Bloody Beijing Spring* (Artarmon: ABC Enterprises, 1990).

[33] Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1997), 7.

[34] Abbas, "Cosmopolitan De-scriptions," 777.

[35] This work is mostly from the discipline of cultural studies, an area of study given new relevance for Hong Kong by the resurgence of interest in uncovering unique aspects of Hong Kong culture and identity. Abbas has written "In the 80s and 90s when Hong Kong felt itself to be at its most politically vulnerable, the question of 'Hong Kong identity' was uppermost in everyone's mind. It was essential that Hong Kong be perceived as a 'special case', because so much of the argument about its post-'97 autonomy depended on it. It was also during this period that 'Cultural Studies' established

social vulnerabilities were reflected in areas such as the Hong Kong cinema of the 1980s and 1990s, in the built space and architecture of the Hong Kong urban environment or within photographic, literary, filmic or dramatic depictions of Hong Kong. Much of what they have identified centres on how Hong Kong Chinese have been forced to define themselves against mainland Chinese ideologies, nationalisms and social cultures. In doing so, Hong Kong subjects have drawn upon a unique history of colonialism, an ambiguous relationship with cultural Chineseness, a highly developed urban environment and the internationally configured advanced capitalist lifestyle and economy of Hong Kong in order to assert Hong Kong identities based around cultural economic and social specificity.[36] Writing prior to 1997, Abbas reflected that

> When sovereignty reverts to China, we may expect to find a situation that is quasi-colonial but with an important historical twist: the colonized state, while politically subordinate, is in many other crucial aspects *not* in a dependent subaltern position but is in fact more advanced – in terms of education, technology, access to international networks, and so forth – than the colonizing state…Such a situation may well be unprecedented in the history of colonialism, and it might justify the use of the term *postcoloniality* in a special sense: a postcoloniality that precedes decolonization.[37]

Abbas' work on late twentieth century Hong Kong culture and its politics of disappearance is important because it prefigures the development – both in Hong Kong cultural expression, but also in everyday Hong Kong life – not just of assertive Hong Kong cultures and identities, but also of visible and self-consciously political *homosexual* identities and subcultures. Phil Chan has argued that it was a combination of the political fallout from both the Joint Declaration and the Tiananmen Massacre as well as the anxieties about Hong Kong's future that led to the British colonial administration to decriminalise homosexual acts in 1991. He situates decriminalisation – as well as broader processes such as the wholesale adoption into Hong Kong law of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the extension of Hong Kong's limited forms of representative democracy – as an attempt to distinguish Hong Kong legal, social and cultural systems from their mainland Chinese equivalents.[38] In terms of sexuality rights, there is a certain

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itself as a discipline, and its most important discovery or invention was the new field that we now call 'Hong Kong Culture': the impetus behind both the discipline and the field was an urgent political need to define identity.": Ackbar Abbas, "(H)Edge City: A Reponse to 'Becoming (Postcolonial) Hong Kong'," *Cultural Studies* 15, no. 3/4 (2001): 623-24. For a good overview, see the 2001 special issue of *Cultural Studies* entitled 'Becoming (Postcolonial) Hong Kong'.

[36] Hui Yew Foong, "In Search of Heunggongyan: The Construction of a Metropolitan Identity," Hong Kong Culture and Society Programme, The University of Hong Kong, http://www.hku.hk/hkcsp/ccex/ehkcss01/a_pdf8.htm. On the ambiguous relationship with Mainland China see also: Anthony Fung, "What Makes the Local? A Brief Consideration of the Rejuvenation of Hong Kong Identity," *Cultural Studies* 15, no. 3/4 (2001).

[37] Abbas, *Hong Kong*, 5-6. Original emphasis.

[38] Phil C.W. Chan, "The Lack of Sexual Orientation Anti-Discrimination Legislation in Hong Kong: Breach of International and Domestic Legal Obligations," *International Journal of Human Rights* 9, no. 1 (2005): 71-73. The decriminalisation of male homosexual acts has since been extended to all of Britain's remaining colonies, due to pressure

ambiguity to such attempts; the decriminalisation of buggery merely brought colonial Hong Kong law into line with Mainland Chinese legal cultures, which do not specifically criminalise homosexual acts. Indeed, decriminalisation was initially met with opposition and widespread anger in Hong Kong Chinese society.[39] Yet, as the handover of sovereignty neared, a modern quasi-democratic Hong Kong, participating in globally sanctioned conceptions of human rights and paying at least lip service to the tolerance of sexual diversity was defined sharply against the supposed illiberalism, repression and sexual intolerance of the People's Republic of China.[40] The 1980s and 90s saw widespread interest in the socio-legal position and treatment of homosexual men and women in Mainland China. Reports of the time highlighted official denials of the existence of homosexuality in Mainland Chinese society, the punishment of homosexuals under anti-hooliganism laws, attempts to force changes in sexual orientation through aversion and electric shock therapy and official characterisations of homosexuality as one of the "evils" of Western capitalist societies.[41] These negative depictions were arguably overdrawn; as the date of the Handover neared, the PRC's regulation of homosexuality did become less punitive. But for Hong Kong homosexuals – and, perhaps more interestingly, for widespread elements of "mainstream" Hong Kong society - the fear of the Mainland's sexual and political repressions being enforced in Hong Kong, combined with broader apprehensions about loss of cultural and social particularity, spurred a greater interest in the exploration, definition and life worlds of non-normative sexual subcultures.

Post-Joint Declaration, there has been a marked increase in the visibility of homosexuality in Hong Kong culture. Critics have pointed to the ways in which the Hong Kong cinema of this time became a forum in which to question the motives of both British and Chinese governments, and the likely effects of their diplomacy and policies with regard to Hong Kong.[42] Under such

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from European human rights bodies. See: Marcelo Ballve, "Angry but Resigned, Islanders Ready for Britain to Scrap Anti-Gay Laws," *The Associated Press*, 17 November 2000, Jo Dillon, "Britain to Legalise Gay Sex in Colonies," *The Independent*, 12 November 2000.

[39] Helen Hok-Sze Leung, "Queerscapes in Contemporary Hong Kong Cinema," *positions: east asia cultures critique* 9, no. 2 (2001): 426-27.

[40] Gali Kronenberg, "Enter the Red Dragon: The Future of Gay Culture in China and Hong Kong," *The Advocate*, 24 June 1997.

[41] See generally: Cui Zi'en, "Filtered Voices: Representing Gay People in Today's China," *International Institute for Asian Studies Newsletter*, no. 29 (2002), Janet Hurwich and Christopher D. Tori, "Consequences of Impending National Change: Symptoms of Psychological Distress among Homosexual and Heterosexual Men Living in Hong Kong," *Journal of Homosexuality* 38, no. 3 (2000): 86-87, Nicholas D. Kristof, "China Using Electrodes to 'Cure' Homosexuals," *The New York Times*, 29 January 1990, 2, Fang-Fu Ruan, "China," in *Sociolegal Control of Homosexuality: A Multi-Nation Comparison*, ed. Donald J. West and Richard Green (New York: Plenum Press, 1997), 63-66, Fang-Fu Ruan, *Sex in China: Studies in Sexology in Chinese Culture* (New York: Plenum Press, 1991), Fang-Fu Ruan and Vern L. Bullough, "Lesbianism in China," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 21 (1992), Fang-Fu Ruan and Yung-Mei Tsai, "Male Homosexuality in Contemporary Mainland China," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 17 (1987).

[42] John Nguyet Erni, "Like a Postcolonial Culture: Hong Kong Reimagined," *Cultural Studies* 15, no. 3/4 (2001): 399.

analyses, the growing political outspokenness of Hong Kong film reflected an increased feeling that the realm of institutional politics was increasingly being configured to close off options for dissent or debate. Other commentators have linked the expanded deployment of homosexual identities and subcultures in Hong Kong cultural production to broader insecurities over Hong Kong's future under PRC rule.[43] Grossman explores these issues in his study of Hong Kong film, arguing that, with the 1997 deadline approaching,

> liberal (and liberating) homosexual subject matter became one of Hong Kong cinema's primary allegories for the dread of the Mainland's homophobic version of "communism" – could Hong Kong continue its path to politico-sexual liberty or would HK's reversion dash its hopes for freedom. Thus the cinematic allegory was crystallized: the feared "nonexistence" of individual freedom post-1997 became mirrored in Mainland China's official line on the "nonexistence" of Chinese homosexuality. Political freedom became sexual freedom, as homosexuality – and by extension trans-sexuality/transgender – became *the* metaphor for individual freedom.[44]

There are obvious parallels here with the discourses of sodomy that I explored in Malaysian society in the previous chapter. Yet in this case, homosexual identities, relationships and politics do not emerge as symbolising a West rejected by political managers in the pursuit of postcolonial nationalism. For Hong Kong's cultural agenda-setters at least, they appear to stand for a liberal, Westernised, yet distinctively Chinese metropolitan and transnationally-configured Hong Kong identity in danger of disappearing at the very moment of its being incorporated into a national, arguably postcolonial, form. As Helen Leung has argued, in her reading of the cultural and political landscape of this time, the territory's anxieties over loss and displacement were themselves "endlessly displaced onto an ever-proliferating range of concerns that are contiguous, yet never identical or reducible, to the postcolonial predicament. One of the richest sites of this displacement is that of queer sexuality."[45] As Hong Kong grappled with the issues of "becoming postcolonial"[46] even while facing incorporation into a state whose nationalism was already largely set, homosexual identities and politics emerged as a complex and multivariate locus of meaning that operated as a boundary marker helping to define the ambit of the territory's unique social, cultural and political characteristics.

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[43] Leung, "Queerscapes in Contemporary Hong Kong Cinema," 423-24. For an extended reading of these issues with regard to one Hong Kong film, director Wong Kar-Wai's acclaimed *Happy Together*, which was released just months before the 1997 handover of sovereignty, see: Jeremy Tambling, *Wong Kar-Wai's Happy Together* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003).

[44] Andrew Grossman, "The Rise of Homosexuality and the Dawn of Communism in Hong Kong Film: 1993-1988," in *Queer Asian Cinema: Shadows in the Shade*, ed. Andrew Grossman (Binghampton: Harrington Park Press, 2000), 151. Original emphasis.

[45] Leung, "Queerscapes in Contemporary Hong Kong Cinema," 424.

[46] I owe the phrase to the 2001 special issue of *Cultural Studies* entitled 'Becoming (Postcolonial) Hong Kong'.

Such processes operated very much at the level of public discourse and artistic representation. They inscribed homosexuality and homosexual identities into the broader culture in ways that saw homosexual communities and identities used to represent cosmopolitanism, distinctiveness and progressiveness while simultaneously binding them to extant, largely conservative, socio-cultural understandings of otherness and controversy. Even when shown as arising in intrinsically, even symbolically, Hong Kong spaces and societies, the understandings of homosexuality that operated in Hong Kong cultural production were constituted from a blend of received understandings that drew upon largely stereotyped representations of sexual and gendered behaviour as well as globally circulating ideas about homosexual identity.[47] The search for a politics of resistance for Hong Kong, pursued through the presentation and deployment of cultural and sexual cosmopolitanism, involved the (by now) familiar paradox of the turn to the international. For the homosexual identities that supposedly operated as an allegory for Hong Kong's distinctiveness *vis-à-vis* both the departing colonial overlord and the new sovereign power drew much of their supposed specificity from an ambiguous relationship with external processes. These included Western metropolitan concepts such as the legal-juridical protection of homosexual rights, the assertive socio-politically liberated homosexual subject and the global circulation of homosexual identities, politics and cultures through the mass-media, information technology and tourist and expatriate populations. At the same time, these understandings and identities were processed through, found expression within and drew upon the cultural resources of Hong Kong's majority Chinese population and their often equivocal relationship with their own cultural and social "Chineseness".[48] In the latter part of this chapter, I explore the politics of this ambivalent transnational process, beyond the levels of cultural production and elite cultural politics, examining the everyday lived experience of homosexuality in the city-spaces of Hong Kong.

Historically, it is in cities that critical discourses and liberatory movements based around sexuality have been concentrated and played out.[49] And it almost goes without saying that Hong Kong itself

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[47] Grossman's comments (above) regarding the perceived linkages between homosexuality and transsexuality and transgender are informative in this regard. This can be seen in a number of Hong Kong films of the time with titles such as *He's a Woman, She's a Man* (1994) and *Who's the Woman, Who's the Man?* (1996).

[48] See, on this: Rey Chow, "Introduction: On Chineseness as a Theoretical Problem," in *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory: Reimagining a Field*, ed. Rey Chow (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 22-25.

[49] Robert Aldrich, "Homosexuality and the City: An Historical Overview," *Urban Studies* 41, no. 9 (2004).

is first and foremost a city: imagined, constructed, ruled and fought over as a predominantly urban space. Richard Phillips and Diane Watt have criticised existing studies of sexuality for concentrating almost exclusively on urban phenomena. In their reading, a focus on debates between official state-based discourses and sexual minorities played out in national city-spaces, acts to reify sexual identities and construct theories of sexuality based almost solely on the Western metropolitan experience. They argue for a greater focus on how sexualities function in liminal or in-between spaces, and away from metropolitan centres or globally understood sexual capitals; "at some material and metaphorical distance from both the regulation and the liberation of the centre".[50] While certainly not a rural or non-urban space, Hong Kong does provide an opportunity to explore contexts of significance to the analysis Phillips and Watt suggest. Hong Kong's world-view is at once shaped by financial imperatives and focussed on the external and the global, in line with the entrepôt economy that is its *raison d'être*. Never quite a city-state and, while indelibly marked by both cultures, neither historically very British nor post-colonially entirely Chinese, the territory's liminal nature makes it a space where sexualities are both less stable but also, perhaps, able to be more imaginatively constituted and transacted.

As I have already suggested, the growing attention paid to homosexuality in Hong Kong society and culture, and its interlacement with broader political developments, proceeded alongside another internationally impelled process of change that affected the territory. Saskia Sassen and John Friedmann have spearheaded analysis into the phenomenon of "world" or "global" cities.[51] Assessment of which particular cities fall into this category is made against almost exclusively economic criteria which measure how global economic change has triggered the development in city-spaces of political, financial, infrastructural, cultural and informational resources which then act as catalysts for the efficient spread and reinforcement of global capitalism itself.[52] Other critics have argued that this focus on individual cities obscures the operation of what they term "global city regions", broader spaces in which major cities are linked, either with their hinterlands or with each other, to service the requirements of global capital flow.[53]

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[50] Richard Phillips and Diane Watt, "Introduction," in *De-Centring Sexualities: Politics and Representation Beyond the Metropolis*, ed. Richard Phillips, Diane Watt, and David Shuttleton (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 1.

[51] John Friedmann, "The World City Hypothesis," *Development and Change* 17 (1986), Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 2000), Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 3-84, 345-63.

[52] **Harvey describes this process as one where time and space are compressed, "generated out of the pressures of capital accumulation with its perpetual search to annihilate space through time and reduce turnover time": David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990), 306-07.**

[53] Scott, *Global City-Regions*. See also: Carolyn Cartier, *Globalizing South China* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).

Whether or not Hong Kong is a global city in its own right,[54] or whether it functions as part of a broader global city region encompassing the Peal River Delta and the Mainland Chinese cities of Shenzhen and Guangzhou, is (for my current purposes at least) a moot point.[55] For Hong Kong, in competition both with other Asian hubs, such as Singapore, and with other Chinese cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai, has sought, aggressively and self-consciously, to remake itself in the image of a global city. In doing so, it has been reshaped by the engagements with flows of global change that such a role necessitates.[56]

The most visible manifestation of Hong Kong's metamorphosis from colonial outpost to global city has been in the transformation of the Hong Kong skyline from an architectural expression of British colonial mercantilism to one dominated by the skyscrapers housing international conglomerates, transnational corporations and banking giants.[57] The urban space of much of Hong Kong has been reshaped in order to render it more amenable to the requirements of global capitalism, and the new international elite of businesspeople who ensure its continued operation and growth. For Sassen, this entails a city made up of "airports, top level business districts, top of the line hotels and restaurants, a sort of urban glamour zone."[58] It is not hard to perceive Hong Kong's attempt to meet such requirements of global-cityhood. The new Hong Kong International Airport that opened in 1988 is regularly voted the world's best, as is the Hong Kong-based international airline, Cathay Pacific.[59] Major infrastructure projects seek to position Hong Kong as among the most vibrant and efficient places in which to transact business, while much is made of the colonial inheritance of the British rule of law, offering to business the all-important security of contract. Hong Kong's global city aspirations became even more obvious in 2001 when the Hong Kong government launched a major international branding campaign for the city, under the slogan "Hong Kong: Asia's World City". Iconic Hong Kong symbols, such as

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[54] Ray Forrest, Adrienne La Grange, and Ngai-Ming Yip, "Hong Kong as a Global City? Social Distance and Spatial Differentiation," *Urban Studies* 41, no. 1 (2004): 209-11.
[55] See, for instance: David K. Y. Chu, "The Hong Kong-Zhujiang Delta and the World City System," in *Emerging World Cities in Pacific Asia*, ed. Fu-Chen Lo and Yue-Man Yeung (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1996).
[56] Werner Breitung and Mark Günter, "Local and Social Change in a Global City: The Case of Hong Kong," Department of Geography, Loughborough University, http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/rb/rb159.html.
[57] For an exploration of this process, see: Lisa Law, "Defying Disappearance: Cosmopolitan Public Places in Hong Kong," *Urban Studies* 39, no. 9 (2002): 1630-35.
[58] Saskia Sassen, "Whose City Is It? Globalization and the Formation of New Claims," *Public Culture* 8, no. 2 (1996): 220.
[59] "Cathay Pacific Airways Named as World's Best in the 2005 World Airline Awards," Skytrax Research, http://www.airlinequality.com/2005/airline-05-press.html, "Hong Kong International Airport Is Named as World's Best by Airline Passengers in the 2005 World Airport Awards," Skytrax Research, http://www.airlinequality.com/2005/2005-airport-press-txt.htm.

Cathay Pacific aircraft and the cross-harbour Star Ferry were repainted to carry this slogan, and banners announcing it were hung throughout the Central Business District.[60]

But the remaking of Hong Kong in the form of the global city is not just about urban renewal and redecoration. For inasmuch as the global city phenomenon gives rise to new urban forms, these new spatialities in turn give rise to different types of social space and new social identities. In a compelling reading of the Hong Kong urban environment, Tsung-yi Huang has identified a socio-spatial divide between those who inhabit or have access to the internationalised "glamour zones" of the global city, and those local Hong Kong Chinese who occupy an increasingly limited and congested social as well as physical space within the urban environment.[61] The transformation of Hong Kong into the global-city form, Huang argues, has created a "dual city", where local Hong Kong citizens attempt to carve out living spaces and lifestyles in the limited spaces remaining after the city's social and physical transformation.[62] The city has been reshaped by and for a class of immigrant or transient cosmopolitan managers, businesspeople and executives and impacted by massive numbers of migrant domestic and construction workers and immigrants who have flocked to the city seeking opportunities to participate in the service industries and construction projects that the new global city requires. This has both compressed, but also radically reorganised, the possibilities for local life worlds and processes of self-imagining.[63] In a city-space marked by urban hyper-density, Huang argues, "global influx, in complicity with the state's own interests, decidedly circumscribes the relatively fixed and limited local space."[64]

The spatial-social divide identified by Huang reflects the distinction drawn by Ulf Hannerz between cosmopolitans and locals in what he terms "world culture": the globalization of cultural diversity through the interconnection of different cultures and the development of increasingly deterritorialised cultures. Hannerz has explicitly linked these phenomena to the rise of the global city.[65] He presents cosmopolitanism as a field that impels and enables a certain class of

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[60] See generally: Brand Hong Kong Management Office, "The Brand Hong Kong.", Breitung and Günter, "Local and Social Change in a Global City."

[61] Tsung-yi Michelle Huang, "Hong Kong Blue: *Flâneurie* with the Camera's Eye in a Phantasmagoric Global City," *Journal of Narrative Theory* 30, no. 3 (2000), Tsung-yi Michelle Huang, *Walking between Slums and Skyscrapers: Illusions of Open Space in Hong Kong, Tokyo and Shanghai* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 13-56. The social effects of this process of reshaping on a particular class of (largely Western) cosmopolitan international managers in Hong Kong is captured beautifully in: Pico Iyer, *The Global Soul: Jet Lag, Shopping Malls, and the Search for Home* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 79-114.

[62] The concept of the "dual city" is from: John H. Mollenkopf and Manuel Castells, eds., *Dual City: Restructuring New York* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1991).

[63] Huang, "Hong Kong Blue," 387-89.

[64] Ibid.: 389.

[65] Ulf Hannerz, *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 102-11, 27-39.

internationally mobile (or at least internationally aware) individuals to shape varying cosmopolitan identities through the selective engagement with, and mastery of, both "domestic/national" and "foreign/international" cultures.[66] At the same time, cosmopolitans – be they exiles, expatriates or migrant labourers - require the existence of social and cultural diversity in order to provide the local difference against which they build their own increasingly transnational and extraterritorial identities. For the locals who provide this cultural experience of difference through their own life practises, the story is somewhat different. Their own survival and ongoing cultural integrity demands negotiation of the very forces – globalization, movement, and change – that allow cosmopolitanism to exist in the first place.[67]

      In the Hong Kong case, scholars have pointed to the fact that the most internationalised and transient of Hong Kong's residents – the managerial classes who occupy elite positions and the lowly-paid migrant labour that serves in the construction and the domestic services industry that globalisation has created – occupy polarised ends of the income spectrum. Local Hong Kong Chinese, on the other hand, with their greater access to governmental support, public housing and local employment opportunities, have emerged as a significant middle class.[68] Huang, sees this divide opening along class lines, arguing that "the picture-perfect global space lies outside of the everyday reality of those lower-middle class walkers on the street. The urban spectacle which attracts international investors and tourists might be physically close to the walkers but is virtually intangible to them in their daily experience of walking in the city."[69] Huang challenges the Hong Kong government's official characterisations of the global city as a space of opportunity, freedom and openness. She argues that despite the physical closeness of the fruits of globalization and cosmopolitanism the opportunities for most local Hong Kong Chinese to access those global spaces remain very limited. Yet, she goes on to assert that while from certain social and physical viewpoints the benefits and impact of globalization and urban restructuring may appear distant or even invisible, very few Hong Kong spaces or social forms have escaped their touch or influence.[70] Under her analysis, the possibilities for transgression of social or urban orders, whether done by

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[66] Ibid., 103-04.
[67] Ashis Nandy's discussion of the cosmopolitanism of Bangalore's auto-rickshaw drivers is instructive on this point: Ashis Nandy, "The Darker Side of Modernity," in *Postcolonizing the International: Working to Change the Way We Are*, ed. Phillip Darby (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006).
[68] Stephen W. K. Chiu and Tak-lok Lui, "Testing the Global City-Social Polarisation Thesis: Hong Kong since the 1990s," *Urban Studies* 41 no. 10 (2004): 1884-88, Forrest, La Grange, and Yip, "Hong Kong as a Global City?," 221-24.
[69] Huang, "Hong Kong Blue," 395.
[70] Ibid.: 397-98.

cosmopolitan or local, are usually only permitted under terms that act to re-empower the logic of global capitalism and the social order that has been structured to support it.

Other scholars of contemporary Hong Kong are less pessimistic. Lisa Law, for instance sees the cosmopolitanism of Hong Kong's urban space as both produced by Hong Kong's transformation into the global city and open to appropriation and subversion by Hong Kong subjects. The opportunity to enter into the cosmopolitan, transnational space of the global-city (albeit temporarily or under strict conditions) offers a chance for the possible re-imagining both of self but also of broader Hong Kong identities and politics.[71] Both Law and Huang address, for instance, the phenomenon of the thousands of Filipino female domestic workers who gather each Sunday in the Statue Square of the Hong Kong central business district (a representational space of both Hong Kong's colonial history and its new global city aspirations). Here, the women socialise but also agitate for political outcomes such as better working conditions, maternity rights for domestic workers, and so on. Huang reads this "seemingly subversive claim to the urban glamour space" as representing the contradictions of the global city and largely futile, since "nothing can reconcile the fact that these maids are low paid foreign workers with few legal rights".[72] Law on the other hand presents it as inherently political and productive, offering a way of re-imagining the Hong Kong urban environment as enabling marginalised groups – she points to the use of Statue Square not just by Filipino maids but for pro-democracy protests, remembrance of the Tiananmen massacre, etc – to articulate political, social and identity-based claims to the polis.[73] For Law, the "actually existing cosmopolitanisms"[74] both of the Hong Kong global city and of even the most lowly paid servitors of the global economy provide opportunities for dissent and the re-imagining of personal and social futures in a transnational and globalizing world. Law's identification of the possibilities of the global city to impel and support innovative and dissenting re-imaginings of self and group identities is of course relevant to the processes of homosexual identity formation that occur in Hong Kong urban spaces. And the tension between Huang's characterisations of global subjection as an unavoidable and all-encompassing aspect of life in the global city, opposed to Law's exhortation to view the global city as providing opportunities for social democracy, new

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[71] Law, "Defying Disappearance."
[72] Huang, "Hong Kong Blue," 399 fn 6.
[73] Law, "Defying Disappearance," 1640-44.
[74] The term is from Bruce Robbins, "Introduction Part I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanisms," in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. Peng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

social identities and dissenting politics, can be seen reflected in the politics and processes that have acted to shape Hong Kong's homosexual subjectivities.

For Hong Kong as a claimant to global city-status has also concerned itself with matters of homosexual identity. On this point it is important to remain cognisant of Doreen Massey's caution against reading global cities as consistently sexualised spaces but rather to remain alert to the particular ways in which the sexualisation of the global city form is contingent upon local social, political, cultural, spatial and geographic circumstance.[75] Returning to the sexualised urban zone that exists around the Central - Mid-Levels Escalator, we can see how the resignification of urban space under Hong Kong's transformation into the global city is produced by those processes that give rise to the global city as well as their interaction with, and appropriation by, local cultures and circumstances. A piece of Hong Kong's contemporary built environment has found coalesced around it a series of meanings, debates, practises and identities spanning Western notions of gay and lesbian liberation, local sexual economies, official narratives of global self-positioning and urban cosmopolitanism, the covert pursuit of homosexual encounters, gay and lesbian cultural and sexual tourism and the tensions between visible homosexual identities and a Chinese dominated, but globally impacted, society. Jane M. Jacobs reminds us that, in the postcolonial city, these processes of ascribing social meaning onto place and space

> are formed out of the cohabitation of variously empowered people and the meanings they ascribe to localities and places. They are constituted from the way in which the global and the local always already inhabit one another. They are products of the disparate and contradictory geographies of identification produced under modernity. These struggles produce promiscuous geographies of dwelling in place, in which categories of Self and Other, here and there, past and present, constantly solicit one another.[76]

Both Jacobs and Massey capture something of the processes that occur as the global city becomes inscribed as a place both of varying sexual opportunities and of identity production: the inequalities in power relations between those attempting to write meanings onto the space of the city, the interactions between global flows and local conditions, issues of access to variously signified spaces and the trafficking between cosmopolitan and local meanings and spaces. As I have already explored, in the lead up to Hong Kong's reversion to Chinese sovereignty, homosexual identities

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[75] Doreen Massey, "Space/Power, Identity/Difference: Tensions in the City," in *The Urbanization of Injustice*, ed. Andy Merrifield and Eric Swyngedou (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995). See also: David Bell and Jon Binnie, *The Sexual Citizen: Queer Politics and Beyond* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 92-95.
[76] Jane M. Jacobs, *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 5.

emerged as a marker of the territory's cosmopolitan and unique nature. Equally, though, the transition from colonial to global city has not just affected homosexual identity formation but has seen homosexual identities drawn into far broader debates about international change and the positioning of the territory in the world economy.

In the Asia of the early 21st century, political and social elites are keen to position their nations, economies and urban capitals for global competitiveness. Intriguingly, for the most developed among these economies, homosexual identities and rights have begun to figure as central in the discussions about national positioning, economic competitiveness and attracting all-important foreign talent. American scholars such as Richard Florida and Marcus Noland who work in the areas of popular attitudes, creativity and regional economic development have found a ready audience for their work in Asian state and economic managers. What is fascinating is that a readiness to draw on supposedly rational pragmatic academic disciplines such as economics and urban planning, has lead many of the advanced "tiger" economies of East and Southeast Asia to an increased engagement with issues relating to homosexuality.

Perhaps the most famous example of this relates to Florida's popular manifesto for success in the new global economy, *The Rise of the Creative Class*.[77] Florida sees creativity and the ability to attract a "creative class" of residents and workers as the *sine qua non* for successful cities and economies under global capitalism. Through his statistical analyses of varying American cities' creativity and economic success – against indices dubbed the "gay index" and the "bohemian index" – Florida asserts that homosexual populations and socio-political tolerance of sexual diversity act as a barometer both for a city's creativity and for its likelihood to succeed economically. He asserts that "[g]ays are the canaries of the creative economy. Where gays are will be a community – a city or a region – that has the underlying preconditions that attract the creative class of people. Gays tend to gravitate towards the types of places that will be attractive to many members of the creative class."[78] Elsewhere, Noland has argued that social attitudes towards homosexuality are indicative of far broader "economically relevant" criteria:

> Perhaps the most surprising result is that attitudes towards homosexuality are highly correlated with economically relevant phenomena such as the ability to attract foreign investment and the level of sovereign bond ratings…In both the US and international data, there is a correlation between acceptance of homosexuality and other characteristics such as acceptance of immigrants and the

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[77] Richard L. Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books :, 2002). See also: Richard L. Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
[78] Christopher Dreher, "Be Creative -- or Die," http://www.salon.com/books/int/2002/06/06/florida/print.html.

> absence of a desire to protect traditional culture, which in turn are correlated with improved economic performance. It could be that attitudes toward homosexuality are part of a broader package of social attitudes towards difference and change, especially change that comes from non-traditional sources.[79]

These sorts of studies are easily critiqued, not the least for their ethnocentrism, their focus on Western models of homosexual identity and their reliance on data from the height of the dot-com boom of the late 1990s.[80] Many scholars working on the intersection between the global city and homosexual identities and politics have warned that there is a need to examine "who counts in the creative class, who is invisibilised and what effects aligning homosexuality with the creative economy has for other queer spaces and identities".[81] Yet research of this kind has had an enormous impact on popular as well as elite thinking in Asia. Many policies and developments currently being pursued by Asia's advanced economies can be traced back to the influence of such analyses. For instance, the massive investments in cultural infrastructure demonstrate the seriousness with which the reshaping of the Asian urban environment to nurture and attract the "creative class" is taken.[82] This has also seen a shift in both public and governmental attitudes towards homosexuality whereby certain sexualised uses – both covert and public – of the city space have become less stringently policed.[83] Writing in the *Straits Times* newspaper of Hong Kong's biggest competitor for the title of "Asia's world city", Chua Mui Hoong put the issue in the following stark terms: "If Singapore is serious about attracting smart, talented people, whether gay or not, many more bigger steps towards greater tolerance - and not just towards gays - must be made. Remember, this is not about gay rights. This is about economic competitiveness."[84]

Such rationalist thinking has permeated both governmental and economic policies and business strategy in contemporary Hong Kong. The administration's attempts to situate Hong Kong as a global city have led government and social/economic elites to confront a new range of sexual issues. These include the tolerance of sexual diversity, the granting of sexuality rights, and

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[79] Marcus Noland, "Tolerance Can Help Countries to Achieve Prosperity," *The Financial Times*, 19 August 2004, 17. The research on which this op-ed piece was based is: Marcus Noland, "Popular Attitudes, Globalization, and Risk (WP 04-2)," in *Working Papers* (Washington: Institute for International Economics, 2004).

[80] For a critique of Florida's work see: Joel Kotkin, "Uncool Cities," Prospect Magazine (Web Exclusive), http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/article_details.php?id=7072.

[81] David Bell and Jon Binnie, "Authenticating Queer Space: Citizenship, Urbanism and Governance," *Urban Studies* 41, no. 9 (2004): 1817-18.

[82] Good examples here would be Singapore's huge new Esplanade-Theatres by the Bay development or the plans for Hong Kong's (even larger) West Kowloon Cultural District.

[83] I have explored these issues with relation to Singapore in a collaborative piece elsewhere: Andrew Lek and Simon Obendorf, "Contentment or Containment: Consumption and the Lesbian and Gay Community in Singapore," http://www.jamesgomeznews.com/article.php?AID=184. See also: Kean Fan Lim, "Where Love Dares (Not) Speak Its Name: The Expression of Homosexuality in Singapore," *Urban Studies* 41, no. 9 (2004).

[84] Mui Hoong Chua, "It's Not About Gay Rights - It's Survival," *The Straits Times*, 9 July 2003.

the ways in which the global city form may (if the logic of people such as Richard Florida is accepted) create but also *require* active and diverse minority sexual subcultures. In 2004, the cover of the Hong Kong-based *Far Eastern Economic Review* carried the headline "Coming Out, Cashing In: Why Gay Rights Make Economic Sense" and inside the newsmagazine a special report on the subject was presented under the starkly rationalist headline of "Gay Asia: Tolerance Pays".[85] In the Hong Kong economy and society, a clear connection has been drawn between the sexual and the cosmopolitan zones of the global city, both configured with respect to their economic and social connections to global capital. Many parts of the Hong Kong urban environment have been reconfigured as both comopolitan spaces but also as areas in which certain kinds of sexual difference and diversity (most obviously those providing financial returns) are allowed to flourish. This can be seen in the gay bars and pubs scattered among the expatriate drinking holes of the cosmopolitan zone of Lan Kwai Fong and the sexualised space traversed by the Central – Mid-Levels Escalator. Both private enterprise and the government appear to be content for such internationalised spaces to be read and promoted as spaces of homosexual culture and opportunity. Tourist promotion of these zones, as both cosmopolitan and sexualised havens, gels with the city's global self positioning; the fact that the government has, as part of its tourist promotions, endorsed a specific tourist itinerary aimed at gay and lesbian foreign visitors indicates the connections being drawn between issues around sexuality and the city's self branding as a world city.[86]

Following this line of reasoning, the Hong Kong administration's strategic approach to issues of homosexuality has seen it expand the political and social spaces open to homosexual men and women. This has involved the government relying on an often-fraught political legitimacy with regard to both a largely homophobic local Hong Kong Chinese population and the new political interests of the Chinese Communist Party in Beijing. For instance, while legislation outlawing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is currently being debated in the territory's Legislative Council, the administration has announced its intention to appeal a recent court decision that overturned differing ages of consent for penetrative anal and vaginal intercourse.[87] But the

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[85] "Cover Story - Gay Asia: Tolerance Pays," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 28 October 2004. It is significant that much of the writing based around the creative economies thesis of scholars such as Florida and Noland proceeds under the rubric of tolerance, rather than acceptance.

[86] On this point see generally: Bell and Binnie, "Authenticating Queer Space.", Jasbir Kaur Puar, "Circuits of Queer Mobility: Tourism, Travel and Globalization," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 8, no. 1-2 (2002), Dereka Rushbrook, "Cities, Queer Space and the Cosmopolitan Tourist," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 8, no. 1-2 (2002).

[87] "Hong Kong Appeals Gay Sex Ruling," Gay.com/PlanetOut Network, http://www.planetout.com/news/article-print.html?2005/10/03/3. See also: "Gay Sex Law a Milestone for HK," *The South China Morning Post*, 29 August 2005 2005, Nick Gentle, "Biased Law on Gay Sex Overturned by Judge," *The South China Morning Post*, 25 August 2005.

physical, social and political spaces of the world city have provided a certain vocabulary and mode of political organising to those advocating reform of Hong Kong law and society. This process, while obviously predicated to a large degree on access to the cosmopolitan and sexualised spaces of the global city, is also providing a means by which homosexual men and women in Hong Kong are laying claim to the ownership and delineation of the world city itself. A recent report from the Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor on sexuality rights in the territory is littered with references to the world city, explicitly measuring Hong Kong both against other world cities, such as New York, but also against perceived standards of rights provision and protection that the global city is supposed to meet.[88] Also addressing sexuality rights, a non-governmental organisation calling for sexual orientation anti-discrimination legislation in Hong Kong has asserted that "[i]t is [not] until everybody is welcomed to full citizenship of Hong Kong that it may claim to be a world-class international city".[89] Again we see how the turn to the international – in this case to the archetype of the global city and to globally circulating understandings of sexuality rights – informs very localised Hong Kong politics and modes of expression. While reshaping Hong Kong into the global city may have been a pragmatic economic decision on the part of successive colonial and postcolonial managers, the sexualised meanings such a remaking has let loose have proved unpredictable but also powerful and attractive rallying points for those articulating a certain vision of Hong Kong homosexual life. As the lawyer who argued the case against the Hong Kong government over the age of consent to penetrative anal intercourse has bluntly stated: "If the government maintains that this is a world city, then they must start acting as one."[90]

Thus far, I have kept the two major strands of my argument – the postcolonial politics of homosexual identities deployed to explain and resist the threat of Hong Kong's possible disappearance under communist rule, and the spatio-sexual politics of cosmopolitanism and local culture in the emerging world city – largely separate. Yet however convenient it might be, such a distinction is artificial. The colonial city, its trade patterns and outward-looking infrastructure, is in

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[88] Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor and Holning Lau, "Sexual Orientation and Human Rights in Hong Kong: A Report Issued by the Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor," Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor, http://www.hkhrm.org.hk/PR/sexualorientationpaper.htm.
[89] Civil Rights for Sexual Diversities, "Sexual Orientation Discrimination Legislation: A Position Paper," (Hong Kong: Civil Rights for Sexual Diversities, 2005), 7.
[90] "Hong Kong Appeals Gay Sex Ruling."

many ways the predecessor and template for today's global city.[91] And while remaking Hong Kong according to the recipe of the global city may well be about global economics and international relevance, it also conveys a powerful message about the continued relevance of Hong Kong's unique political, social and urban qualities to the People's Republic of China. It is perhaps too early to gauge which of the two elements – renationalisation after colonialism or the aggressive pursuit of international standing as a global city – will have the greatest impact on Hong Kong life worlds. Yet, it is apparent already that a tension has marked Hong Kong society, culture and politics, where, according to Erni, "the precariousness of sinocization is mirrored in the equally unsteady project of keeping Hong Kong a cosmopolitan, outward-looking, civil global city."[92]

These internationally configured processes are obviously feeding into processes of homosexual identity formation, and broader social understandings of homosexuality, in Hong Kong. But for my present purposes, it is more important to ask how the individuals and life worlds they impact are utilising concepts of identity in order to understand and critique processes of global change and the international domain from which such processes emerge. How, we might ask, do the homosexual identities and landscapes emerging in contemporary Hong Kong provide the means, the conceptual frameworks or the impetus for individuals and groups to articulate their own understandings of the international and its functioning? To explore these questions further, I focus on three very different homosexualities – Western styled gay and lesbian identities, Chinese *tongzhi* homosexual identity politics and gender-structured homosexual relationships between immigrant Filipina domestic workers - that operate in today's Hong Kong. In each of these cases it is possible to detect the way homosexual identities, politics and everyday life worlds illuminate both a path out into the international (as it were), but also provide the means by which homosexual men and women in Hong Kong manage, recast and negotiate processes of international change in their day to day lives.

The very fact that I present *three* Hong Kong homosexualities here highlights the plurality and diversity of the individual and collective homosexual identities that operate in the territory. Homosexualities in contemporary Hong Kong are neither monolithic in nature nor applicable to all those with same-gender erotic attraction. In her study of the socially constructed nature of male homosexual identities in Hong Kong, Petula Ho has written of the ways in which these identities

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[91] Abbas, *Hong Kong*, 3, Hannerz, *Transnational Connections*, 127-39.
[92] Erni, "Like a Postcolonial Culture," 410.

emerge from "a diffuse open-ended matrix of potentials and possibilities – to be narrowed down and organized in specific ways by specific socio-historical formations."[93] Elsewhere, Travis Kong has highlighted the ways in which Hong Kong homosexual identities, embodied in sexed Hong Kong subjects, intersect with personally understood notions of race, class, colonial history and urban situation:

> [p]ostcolonial sexual identities should…be read as plural, unstable and regulatory. Identities are always multiple and involve 'identity components' which intersect or combine with one another…But the embodied identities of Hong Kong gay men are not merely the additive experiences of these 'identity components'. Rather they are the result of multifarious and contradictary sets of oppression within specific institutional arenas. Postcolonial embodied sexual identities should therefore be understood in terms of this 'politics of difference' in order to celebrate the multiple ways of understanding homosexual desires.[94]

The 'identity components' that go towards constructing a personal or sexual identity in today's Hong Kong are of course shaped by the colonial histories and contemporary urban realities that I have already traced.[95] A mutually reinforcing and constructive dialogue exists between these internationally impacted components of sexual identities and the identity-based social and political movements that converge upon them. Accordingly, the internal tensions of such identities, and their positioning within Hong Kong society and cultural production, are a productive site from which to read the impact of international flows on sexual identity formation. They can also help demonstrate how everyday understandings of the international are expressed through social and cultural phenomena such as sexual identity, sexual politics and sexual practise.

The first, and perhaps most visible, of these instances has to do with the circulation, consumption and reconfiguration of Western forms of homosexual identity. In a provocative 1995 essay, the Australian commentator Dennis Altman described Hong Kong, along with other Asian urban centres, as having "a homosexual presence about to enter into its own", a presence he characterized as emerging in the dialogue between cultural and governmental pressures and those homosexual identities and lifestyles that "affluence and global media increasingly hold up".[96] Altman's analysis captures an important part (but by no means all) of the story of homosexual identity formation in a postcolonial metropolis such as Hong Kong. For Altman, and scholars like

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[93] Ho, "Male Homosexual Identity in Hong Kong," 73.

[94] Travis Shiu-Ki Kong, "The Seduction of the Golden Boy: The Body Politics of Hong Kong Gay Men," *Body and Society* 8, no. 1 (2002): 29-30.

[95] Ibid.: 30. For a reading of the components of homosexual identity formation from a queer studies perspective see: Steven Seidman, *Queer Theory/Sociology* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 11-12.

[96] Dennis Altman, "The New World of 'Gay Asia'," in *Asian and Pacific Inscriptions: Identities, Ethnicities, Nationalities*, ed. Suvendrini Perera (Bundoora: Meridian, 1995), 133.

him, Western structures of gay and lesbian identity, politics and sexual self-imagining supported and spread by a global capitalist system are important factors in the processes of contemporary sexual identity formation. As Altman argues,

> It has become fashionable to point to the emergence of 'the global gay,' the apparent internationalization of a certain form of social and cultural identity based upon homosexuality. He – sometimes, though less often, she – is conceptualized in terms that are very much based upon recent American fashion and intellectual style.[97]

Despite the criticisms that can be made regarding the often universalising depictions of processes of "global queering", they do catch something of what is occurring in today's Hong Kong. It is easy to see how the processes I have already outlined might feed into the creation of sexual identities, communities and politics based on external, Western models. A history as a colony of the West, a large expatriate and transient population, one of the world's most open economies and the territory's self-conscious positioning as a crossroads linking Mainland China and East and Southeast Asia with global capital and business have all contributed to ensuring that Hong Kong culture and society has been exposed to Western sexual identities and politics. To take just one example, that of tourist flows, a recent article in New York's *Gay City News* promoted gay tourism to the city under the headline "The Newest U.S. Invasion". Similarly, in 2004 the American gay and lesbian newsmagazine, *The Advocate* provided potential gay and lesbian American tourists with a four-page guide to what it termed "the New York of Asia".[98] Yet, the penetration of Western sexual identities into Hong Kong society is neither uniform nor unproblematic.

Simon Gikandi, critically reading the response from postcolonial studies to contemporary forms of globalization, has highlighted the fact that while postcolonial approaches are very good at identifying practises of resistance and sites of difference, they are less successful at addressing the fact that in many parts of the formerly colonised world there exists not a rejection of modernity, but a positive embrace of it. "Unsure how to respond to the failure of the nationalist mandate, which promised modernization outside the tutelage of colonialism", he argues, "citizens of the postcolony are more likely to seek their global identity by invoking the very logic of

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[97] Dennis Altman, "Rupture or Continuity? The Internationalization of Gay Identities," *Social Text* 14, no. 3 (1996): 77.
[98] Steve Friess, "Hong Kong: A Queer World Opens in the New York of Asia," *The Advocate (The National Gay and Lesbian Newsmagazine)*, 17 August 2004, David Kennerley, "The Newest U.S. Invasion: Western Culture Continues to Encroach, but Southeast Asia More Accessible Than Ever," *The Gay City News*, April 29-May 5 2004. The impact of tourist flows on sexual identity formation is explored in: M. Jacqui Alexander, "Imperial Desire/Sexual Utopias: White Gay Capital and Transnational Tourism," in *Talking Visions: Multicultural Feminism in a Transnational Age*, ed. Ella Shohat (New York: The MIT Press in association with the New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998), Puar, "Circuits of Queer Mobility.", Rushbrook, "Cities, Queer Space and the Cosmopolitan Tourist."

Englightenment that postcolonial theory was supposed to deconstruct."[99] Gikandi's arguments potentially have more purchase in Hong Kong, given the ambiguous relationship of the population to external modernist structures such as nationalism, cosmopolitanism and the international. For Gikandi, a disjuncture exists "between the emergence of global images and the global stories of global subjects".[100] Global images (such as the globally circulating conceptions of gay and lesbian identity) should not be mistaken for the material experiences that occur as those images are consumed, lived out and appropriated in everyday lives. To bring such critique into dialogue with materials on Hong Kong sexualities, is to call into question the connections between the everyday lives of members of Hong Kong's gay and lesbian communities, the urban configurations of the Hong Kong cityscape and globally circulating notions of gay and lesbian politics and modes of consumption.

Certainly, the promise of participation in the "new world of gay Asia"[101] (identified by scholars like Dennis Altman) is consumed and understood within Hong Kong society. Petula Ho has written that, in Hong Kong,

> homosexual identity is becoming a more "marketable" label and product. It is at least to some extent a desirable social category to an increasing number of people. It is associated with being western, liberal, avant-garde, members of a special minority – although there is still the price of social stigma. Interestingly, the stigma also helps in turn to make this label more appealing to some people. A person becomes one of the rare specials, different, difficult to understand, beyond comprehension of the ordinary people, with different tastes and lifestyle.[102]

Ho's analysis demonstrates many of the ways in which a global image of gayness or lesbianism becomes an integral part of individuals' negotiations of profoundly international and transnational processes. But, following Gikandi, this consumption of the global image of gay and lesbian politics or lifestyles does not necessarily give rise to sameness, either between Western gays and lesbians and their Hong Kong Chinese counterparts, or between members of Hong Kong gay and lesbian communities themselves. The adoption of a gay or lesbian identity requires the individual to reconcile the contours of the sexualised identifcatory construct they avow with broader personal and societal understandings of western political organising, cosmopolitan behaviour and modes of

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[99] Simon Gikandi, "Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 100, no. 3 (2001): 630.
[100] Ibid.: 632.
[101] The phrase is from the title of: Altman, "The New World of 'Gay Asia'."
[102] Ho, "Male Homosexual Identity in Hong Kong," 87.

consumption, modes of deviance, resistance to social and cultural norms and to processes of globalization and colonialism (in its many guises).

Many analysts have identified what they regard as preconditions for the emergence of Western-styled gay and lesbian identities in postcolonial societies such as Hong Kong. [103] Altman explains that identification with the new global gay and lesbian identities "seems highly correlated with class, ability in English…exposure to western media and involvement in AIDS activities."[104] In the Hong Kong case, it would be prudent to add the phenomenon of a colonial experience prolonged to nearly the end of the 20th century to Altman's list.[105] Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the preconditions Altman identifies are reflected in the regular exhortations from Hong Kong's leaders for its citizens to remake themselves to be more able to benefit from global business opportunities and Hong Kong's new status as a world city. It is but a small step from the qualifications and identities of the knowledge producers of the creative class, most sought-after by the managers of the new global city, to the sorts of personal qualities identified as part of the package needed for local homosexual men and women to craft globalized, Western-style gay or lesbian identities. This immediately raises issues of culture and race, of sexual desire and most fundamentally, of class.[106] And in all of these areas, Hong Kong gay and lesbian identities become a means by which postcolonial Hong Kong subjects negotiate multiple personal connections to the international.

A good example comes from fiction. In his novel *Dress Like a Boy*, the American author and filmmaker Quentin Lee depicts his protagonist, a gay Chinese-American student, returning from the sexual liberalism of San Francisco and the University of California, Berkeley to visit family members in Hong Kong, just prior to the 1997 Handover of sovereignty. The narrator is invited to a meeting where a group of Hong Kong gay men are planning to set up a Western-styled gay and lesbian rights lobby and telephone counselling service. He is repulsed by the fact that the meeting is carried out entirely in the English language, that an Englishman chairs it and that all decisions seem

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[103] For a succinct overview of such social, political, cultural and economic preconditions see: Barry D. Adam, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and André Krouwel, "Gay and Lesbian Movements Beyond Borders? National Imprints of a Worldwide Movement," in *The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics: National Imprints of a Worldwide Movement*, ed. Barry D. Adam, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and André Krouwel (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999).

[104] Dennis Altman, "Research and Its Discontents," *Melbourne Journal of Politics* 24 (1997): 41.

[105] In a later piece, Altman has explicitly addressed colonial histories on sexual identity formation: Dennis Altman, "Talking Sex," *Postcolonial Studies: Culture, Politics, Economy* 3, no. 2 (2000).

[106] Martin F. Manalansan has argued with respect to Filipino homosexual identities, that such identities form from an "intricate grid of hierarchies and oppressions…[where t]he gay postcolonial body is caught in the intersection of class, desire and race.": Martin F. Manalansan, IV., "(Re)Locating the Gay Filipino: Resistance, Postcolonialism and Identity," *Journal of Homosexuality* 26, no. 2/3 (1993): 65-66.

to be made by Western expatriates, despite the presence of several local Chinese men. He muses on the explicit racial and colonial mentality apparent in the meeting's dynamic and in the gay and lesbian political organisation it aims to set up, and asks himself whether he (himself an ambivalently positioned outsider on a temporary visit) should trust the Western men present to represent and shape gay and lesbian politics in late-colonial Hong Kong.[107] Lee's fictional account highlights the colonial provenance and external focus of much of the gay and lesbian social, commercial and political infrastructure in contemporary Hong Kong, where certain zones of the city are replete with commercial gay and lesbian venues designed to engage globally-repeated forms of consumption by expatriates, locals and tourists. Similarly, Grewal and Kaplan have argued that global capitalism acts as a catalyst for the creation of cosmopolitan and class-based sexual movements, which in turn act to generate "new sites of power rather than simply forms of resistance."[108] These new sites are perhaps most visible in Hong Kong in the economic sphere, manifest in commercially configured gay and lesbian spaces. A commercial gay scene – "largely male dominated, highly class-specific, youth-oriented, camp-phobic, fashion conscious and coloured by substantial western input" – operates to shape its participants' adherence to rigidly defined and globally circulating structures of gay and lesbian identity.[109]

An identification of the class and consumption based nature and Western flavour of these Hong Kong gay and lesbian identities is significant. It demonstrates how some Hong Kong subjects are using concepts of sexual identity as well as pre-existing positions of power such as personal economic wealth, English language ability, and access to western media forms and cultural productions as tickets of entry into the internationalized zones of the global city. Gay or lesbian identities, under such a reading, become one of the means by which local Hong Kong subjects are able to enter into transnational and cosmopolitan physical and metaphoric spaces and negotiate personal engagements with transnational issues and processes. Sexual identity becomes a way of accessing, but, more significantly, exerting some forms of agency over, the international politics, processes and events that I traced in the first two sections of this chapter. Some examples will help demonstrate these phenomena more clearly.

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[107] Quentin Lee, *Dress Like a Boy* (Lincoln: Writers Club Press, 2000), 112-18.
[108] Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, "Global Identities: Theorizing Transnational Studies of Sexuality," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 7, no. 4 (2001).
[109] Travis Shiu-Ki Kong, "Queer at Your Own Risk: Marginality, Community and Hong Kong Gay Male Bodies," *Sexualities* 7, no. 1 (2004): 19.

Despite the increasing wealth of certain portions of the Hong Kong populace, commentators working on Hong Kong homosexualities have identified the ways in which sexuality has become a way of managing the racial and economic inequalities that continue to divide local Chinese and expatriate or visiting Westerners. The Western gay man or lesbian is often perceived as representing sophistication, cosmopolitanism and modernity, with sexual relations between local Chinese and Western expatriates or tourists operating as a means of accessing lifestyle, consumption, travel, migration or cultural opportunities that might otherwise be unattainable. Highlighting both the spatial and colonial basis of such thinking, Kong argues that the "will to 'hook up' with Westerners in order to seek social mobility is intensified by the spatial constraints, the patterns of family residence and issues of de-colonization."[110] While the differences that shape these relationships are worthy of study in their own right, it is significant that local Hong Kong men and women have seen sexuality as a domain by which certain transnational, colonially and historically impacted axes of inequality can be, if not ameliorated, then at least navigated. There is a comprehensive literature exploring the sexual incursions that took place across the multiple and complex racial, social and economic boundaries created by colonialism.[111] Without disavowing the profoundly unequal nature of many such relationships, both colonially and postcolonially, it is also important to read them in ways that do not deny subjects their individual agency. Personal motives and broader concepts of social standing influence a Hong Kong Chinese man or woman's decision to seek out homosexual relations with a Westerner and enter into transnationally configured gay and lesbian spaces. If we revisit the work of the Comaroffs that I introduced in the previous chapter, it is possible to see here how these sexual, interpersonal relations, assuming their shape and meanings in the postcolonial Hong Kong cityscape, provide their participants with the means of negotiating global processes that can otherwise seem well beyond an individual subject's influence or understanding. The Hong Kong materials here demonstrate the ways in which the mediation of sexual connections between individuals (and between people, places and space) through social domains created by sexual identities and politics, also stand as productive sources of both personal and collective understandings of the international.

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[110] Kong, "The Seduction of the Golden Boy."

[111] For readings of this from varying perspectives see: Ronald Hyam, "Empire and Sexual Opportunity," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 14, no. 2 (1986), Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), Grant Parsons, "Another India: Imagining Escape from the Masculine Self," in *At the Edge of International Relations: Postcolonialism, Gender and Dependency*, ed. Phillip Darby (London and New York: Pinter, 1997). Marcia Langton's discussion of the sexual relations between white settlers and indigenous Australian women is also instructive in this regard: Marcia Langton, "The Changing Complexions of Race," in *Postcolonizing the International: Working to Change the Way We Are*, ed. Phillip Darby (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006).

If sexual identity and practise are about asserting a claim to cosmopolitan spaces and self-imaginings, how have such practises shifted with the changing international circumstances of the Hong Kong polity? If sexuality can be read as providing a view out into the international and a means (for some at least) of assuaging many of the inequalities created by global capitalism, have the uses of sexual identity shifted with Hong Kong's reversion to Chinese sovereignty and its changing status within global capitalism? While my comments here must be (due to the novelty of the materials) preliminary and speculative, certain recent developments within the territory can be read as tracing the earliest outlines of just such a shift. It is not that sexuality or sexual identities are no longer providing the language or basis from which to describe the international, but rather that such processes of description and management of international processes always operate in ways contingent upon broader social, political and transnational forces of change.[112]

Foremost, this can be seen in the development of what could be called a "domestic diaspora": Hong Kong Chinese who, as a result of nervousness over the changeover of sovereignty and the politics of disappearance identified by Abbas, have sought and gained residency or citizenship in another, usually Western, country. Writing on this phenomenon, Abbas has spoken of how fears over the Mainland's rule of Hong Kong led to a situation where certain local Chinese sought out foreign passports or residency rights. This was not necessarily about leaving Hong Kong. Rather, it functioned as an insurance policy that enabled individuals to *stay* in Hong Kong, more confident of thus being able to weather any negative political or social developments after the Handover.[113] While this functioned largely along class lines (as Abbas satirically comments "those who can afford it, get a foreign passport and leave; those who can't, get the Basic Law and stay"),[114] it has acted to influence the sorts of identity politics and claims functioning within post-Handover Hong Kong. The rhetoric of Mainland Chinese repressions and excesses has proved mostly overblown. But it has left in its wake an elite social and political class, many of whose members are able to legitimately make claims on other national spaces and jurisdictions. These people are increasingly using Hong Kong's international self-positioning as a "global" city, and the language of citizenship and rights to domesticate transnational understandings and externally derived politics in

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[112] The discussion that follows draws heavily on the chapter entitled "Colonialism and the Birth of Sexual Identity Politics in Hong Kong" in: Wah-Shan Chou, *Tongzhi: Politics of Same-Sex Eroticism in Chinese Societies* (Binghamton: Haworth Press, 2000), 59-94.
[113] Ackbar Abbas, "Building Hong Kong: From Migrancy to Disappearance," *Postcolonial Studies: Culture, Politics, Economy* 1, no. 2 (1998): 185.
[114] Ibid.

the Hong Kong space. Citizenship or residency rights in places such as Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Britain or the United States have not just led to local Hong Kong Chinese availing themselves of extra-territorial legal rights, educational opportunities or the chance to interact with Western gay and lesbian populations and spaces. They have also led to a greater preparedness on the part of Hong Kong's homosexual elites to replicate or assert these external understandings within Hong Kong itself. Reading the differences between those Hong Kong gay men who have studied or worked in the former colonial capital, London, with those local Hong Kong men who have not experienced such movement, Travis Kong has identified the profound impact of differing spatialities on the nature of sexual identities adopted.

> Hong Kong gay men who had or have been living in London tend to enjoy their sexuality more freely as they are virtually free from familial and other social and cultural restraints…Closely tied to the pattern of family residence, Hong Kong gay men who have always lived in Hong Kong tend to struggle more with issues of family and culture, rather than those of race and sexuality…As Hong Kong has just undergone 'de-colonization', Hong Kong gay men configure and reconfigure their sexual desires under the complex interplay between Britain and China.[115]

Gay and lesbian life in Hong Kong, born largely of the internationalised conjunction of the handover of sovereignty and global city-hood, is in turn acting to bring the international ever closer to the day-to-day lives of Hong Kong homosexuals. Current calls for legislation to outlaw discrimination on the bounds of sexual orientation, or recent court cases seeking to have overseas same-sex marriages recognised within the territory, demonstrate how internationally circulating liberal concepts of citizenship, rights, and forms of gay and lesbian politics and society are acting to reshape the sexual landscapes of contemporary Hong Kong.[116] Further, the emergence of gay and lesbian identity politics, spearheaded by radical groups such as Rainbow Action,[117] shows the extent to which global conceptions of identity are not just lived out in Hong Kong spaces, but are used as a way of staking a claim to what are perceived as global standards of citizenship and sexual rights.[118] These groups have, for instance, protested against the Hong Kong Catholic Church's denial of confession and communion to homosexual men and women, against the exclusion of gay men and lesbians from public housing and against police harrassment of gay and lesbian venues.

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[115] Kong, "The Seduction of the Golden Boy," 30.
[116] Tim Cribb, "State of the Unions," *South China Morning Post*, 29 May 2004, Ravina Shamdasani, "Gay 'Newlyweds' Threaten Legal Action," *South China Morning Post*, 6 October 2003. This is another example of how those with foreign citizenships are attempting to bring the rights and lifestyles they may enjoy in other national spaces back into Hong Kong political and social life-worlds.
[117] The name itself referencing a globally circulating symbol of gay and lesbian pride and identity – the rainbow flag
[118] Tim Cribb, "Separate Camps, Same Aim," *South China Morning Post*, 30 August 2003.

But the influence of the domestic diaspora, in conjunction with Hong Kong society's increasing confidence in its self-positioning as a global city on an equal footing with metropolitan capitals is also evidenced in another shift in sexual meaning and practise that demonstrates the ways in which Hong Kong homosexuals make sense of global changes in their most intimate life worlds. Recent research has suggested a qualitative change in the sorts of relationships and lifestyles being pursued by Hong Kong gays and lesbians, in ways that are often about the management of Western influence (if not the avoidance of Western models). Petula Ho and Adolf Tsang have tracked the ways in which self-identified Hong Kong gay men's sexual and romantic relationships with Western men have undergone substantial changes as a result of the transfer of British sovereignty back to China and the emergence of an affluent Chinese cosmopolitan class. They track a decline in the social status of the "attractive Westerner" in what they term the inter-colonial period of 1984-1997, where "the gradual loss of colonial privilege had rendered Westerners less attractive and less powerful as gay partners."[119] In the lead-up to, and beyond the Handover, they argue, relationships between local Chinese men and Westerners became more equal (in terms of age, socio-economic background and personal wealth of the partners) and sexually reciprocal (they identify a shift from the Westerner almost invariably being the insertive partner in homosexual anal intercourse, to a greater preparedness on both parts for reciprocal anal intercourse or for the Chinese partner to be the active sexual partner).[120] While many of these changes they put down to the "development of an indigenous gay community that is not dependent on the leadership or patronage of Western gay men"[121], the crux of their argument is that

> the continuously changing relationships between two persons may symbolize aspects of the colonial legacy and its resistance. The experience of the [study's] interviewees has shown that personal, sexual choices are always associated with political struggle or movement. The battle has commenced, and on multiple frontiers as well, even when one does not think one is part of it.[122]

It is important not to over-simplify this shift in terms of a binary differentiation, where international issues such as Hong Kong's colonial status become the primary arbiter of racialised homosexual desire. As Kong cautions, "[p]ostcolonial desire does not seem to follow this simple logic."[123] It is axiomatic that the end of British colonial governance does not signal the end of

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[119] Ho and Tsang, "Negotiating Anal Intercourse," 305.
[120] For an alternative reading of this phenomenon against the concept of the ethnosexual frontier see: Joane Nagel, *Race, Ethnicity and Sexuality: Intimate Intersections, Forbidden Frontiers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 224-54.
[121] Ho and Tsang, "Negotiating Anal Intercourse," 318-19.
[122] Ibid.: 319.
[123] Kong, "The Seduction of the Golden Boy," 42.

colonial or Western influence in the territory, where, as we have seen, retained colonial legal structures have proved attractive forums in which gay and lesbian Hong Kong citizens have sought to assert their rights. And for those able to access the cosmopolitan domains of global gay and lesbian culture, an international realm dominated by Western politics, capital culture, identities and modes of consumption still appears to be seen as a space of sexual opportunity to be positively embraced. But, materials such as these do demonstrate the way in which Hong Kong gay and lesbian sexual identities, and the sexual practises shaped and enabled by those identities are – consciously or subconsciously – a domain in and through which international processes are played out, resisted, embraced or refashioned. The international here is present and expressed even in citizens' most private and intimate choices and self-imaginings. And while the sexual boundaries between Hong Kong and the West might well be shifting, the identities, politics and aspirations evident in these cosmopolitan sectors of Hong Kong society do not appear to have undergone substantial change. Michael Tan, writing on the Philippines and highlighting the elitism and external focus of many of the components of such identities, has argued that

> An elite "gay" culture is upheld as the norm, with hopes that eventually we'll have "gay and lesbian rights" defined mainly as gay marriages; to bring home Steve to mom and dad for Thanksgiving dinner, to be able to adopt and raise children and to claim frequent flyer miles for a same sex partner to fly to Sydney for the [annual gay and lesbian] Mardi Gras. These aspirations are real, picked out from conversations I have had with friends.[124]

Adopting gay or lesbian identities can lead to an embrace of certain aspects of the international and of global flows of change. But it is also significant that, as gay and lesbian relationships across racial and international boundaries in Hong Kong may have become more egalitarian, Hong Kong Chinese gay men and lesbians have entered into sexual relationships that themselves can be regarded not just as cosmopolitan, but as colonial. Evidence is emerging to suggest that the new closeness between Hong Kong and the PRC has led to gay men and lesbians from Hong Kong using their greater wealth and new ease of access to the Mainland for gay and lesbian sex tourism, or similarly, to visit developing nations in Southeast Asia for the same purpose.[125] The path out into the international constructed around concepts of sexuality, especially when trodden by

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[124] Michael Tan, "A Response to Dennis Altman from Michael Tan in the Philippines," La Trobe University, http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/emuse/Globalqueering/tan.html.
[125] Kong, "The Seduction of the Golden Boy," 44.

cosmopolitan elites, very often reflects other axes of international power such as development and comparative wealth.

The distinction between cosmopolitans and locals identified by Hannerz, which so clearly colours much of my preceding discussion on gay and lesbian identities, is also relevant to the second of the identity formations I wish to discuss. I have presented Hong Kong's gay and lesbian identities as predominantly cosmopolitan in nature, open to those with social, financial, linguistic and experiential perquisites for entry to the internationalised zones of the global city. What I now move on to examine are the ways that sexual identities function away from the cosmopolitan showpieces of urban Hong Kong, in the local Chinese life worlds identified by Huang as being largely separate from participation in the new cosmopolis but simultaneously shaped and effected by its logic and politics. [126] I am concerned with how these "indigenous" Hong Kong sexual identities might function in ways that disrupt the imperialising ethos that posits a Western style gay or lesbian identity as the inevitable outcome of processes of economic development and transnational globalization.[127] Such processes can be seen in the development in contemporary Hong Kong – and in other Chinese city-spaces in the East Asian region – of what could be described as hybrid and local sexual identities: sexual identities that do not always fit comfortably within the identity categories provided by gay and lesbian discourses. And perhaps the most visible and well critiqued of these are the multiple identities and articulations of same-sex desire that are referenced by the Mandarin Chinese word *tongzhi.*

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the term *tongzhi*, most commonly translated as "comrade" and used as the formal communist mode of address between citizens of the PRC, was adopted by certain Hong Kong activists as an umbrella term for all homosexual and transgendered individuals. Unlike terms such as gay or lesbian, the word *tongzhi* at that point held no sexual connotations and was desirable due to its partial homonymy with other Mandarin Chinese words (such as *tongxinglian* and *tongxingai*) used to describe homosexuality.[128] However, since the 1980s, the term, while still operating in some contexts to designate a coalition of pre-existing identities and social movements, has also come to signify a distinctively postcolonial urban Chinese intervention into identity politics. And as this new identity has taken shape, it has become apparent that it has

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[126] Huang, "Hong Kong Blue," 397-98.
[127] For an excellent discussion of the politics of this process see: Neville Hoad, "Arrested Development or the Queerness of Savages: Resisting Evolutionary Narratives of Difference," *Postcolonial Studies: Culture, Politics, Economy* 3, no. 2 (2000).
[128] Mark McLelland, "Interview with Samshasha, Hong Kong's First Gay Rights Activist and Author," Murdoch University, http://wwwsshe.murdoch.edu.au/intersections/issue4_contents.html.

been moulded by the international processes of change that have reshaped Hong Kong and the East Asian region. *Tongzhi* identities are hybridised identities, which have arisen in already hybridised urban spaces struggling to define their own identities under the influence of colonial and global axes of change.[129] But as the politics of *tongzhi* identities have become clearer, it has also become obvious that these new identities are intended as a toolbox of ideas and strategies which Hong Kong Chinese homosexuals can use when attempting to manage and resist the processes of international change that are reshaping their life worlds. *Tongzhi* politics engage and seek to subvert international changes through a discursive intervention into processes such as colonialism and transnational cultural relations and through attempts to manage the realities of life for local Chinese homosexuals in the limited social, sexual and physical spaces left after Hong Kong's transformation into the global city. The very constitution of *tongzhi* sexual identities and the ways in which they have come to operate in everyday life, provide homosexual Hong Kong Chinese men and women with the tools to describe, resist and recast processes of international change that otherwise might appear monolithic and immutable.

Chou Wah-shan is one of the most prolific authors, both in Chinese and in English, on the new *tongzhi* politics of Hong Kong. He is also one of its leading political activists. Describing the histories and politics that have informed the new sexual identity construct, he singles out the international dimension for special mention.

> Hong Kong PEPS [people erotically attracted to people of the same sex] were trapped by two colonizers in a no-win situation in the 1970s: they were too *gay* to be Chinese, but too Chinese to be liberated *gays*. They had little choice but to create their own identities and strategies of resistance in diverse ways. The rise of *tongzhi* must be located in such a context of ongoing negotiation with colonial Britain, the global hegemony of Americanism, Chinese hegemonic constructs of the family and marriage, and the cultural absence of the homo-hetero duality. Indeed, the category *tongzhi* is by no means purely Chinese. Historically, it originates from communism, which is itself a Western discourse. [130]

One impetus for this new identity form was the 1997 Handover of sovereignty. Antonia Chao sees the activist appropriation of one of communist China's most symbolic terms to describe homosexuality as intentionally ironic, "considering the fact that Hong Kong was to be taken over

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[129] Erni suggests that these "hybrid homosexualities" are transnationally mobile but simultaneously constructed as "Chinese". They emerge as a "a critical emblem for a new – but contestatory and slippery – social and political imaginary in a place caught between a hybrid global/local sexual public culture": John Nguyet Erni, "Towards Queer Cultural Rights," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 6, no. 1 (2005). Erni is reviewing Fran Martin, *Situating Sexualities: Queer Representation in Taiwanese Fiction, Film and Public Culture* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003).
[130] Chou, *Tongzhi*, 293.

by the Peoples Republic of China (a socialist state dominated by 'true comrades')".[131] The deliberate use of a term from Mandarin Chinese (as opposed to the Cantonese language spoken by most Hong Kong Chinese) and one that holds such significant meanings, says much about the sorts of transnational politics into which *tongzhi* identities attempt to insert themselves. Chou has written that

> [i]t is a telling point that as Hong Kong approached 1997, *tongzhi* adopted the most sacred term in communist China as their identity, signifying both a desire to indigenize sexual politics and to reclaim their cultural identity. *Tongzhi* symbolizes a strong sentiment for integrating the sexual (legitimizing same-sex love), political (sharing the goals of combating heterosexism) and cultural (reappropriating Chinese identity).[132]

In some ways, this use of the term *tongzhi* operates similarly to the use of homosexuality in Hong Kong cultural productions before the Handover. It signals an attempt to include homosexuality in the public discourse of what it is to be a postcolonial or renationalised Chinese subject after 1997, while simultaneously using ideas about sexuality and cultural values to propose dissenting visions. The China from which *tongzhi* identities derive their new sexual identities is both threatening (with the possibility of sexual and political repressions) and liberating (promising the end of Western colonialism and the return of access to Chinese cultures and traditions). *Tongzhi* identities are thus shaped by the fear and fascination that Hong Kong society holds regarding Mainland politics and cultures. However, they also seek to offer alternatives – to PRC and Hong Kong societies and governmentalities alike – about the operation of sexuality in Chinese culture and society.

Such overt, transnationally configured, politics perhaps explain why *tongzhi* activists have taken such care to clearly define the purpose and parameters of *tongzhi* identity. An annual series of conferences, bringing together local Hong Kong homosexuals and other sexuality activists from Taiwan, the PRC and the Chinese diaspora worldwide, have had as one of their major purposes the definition of *tongzhi* identity and the description of its unique politics. The inaugural conference, in 1996, even went as far as to issue a political manifesto, setting out the movement's goals. The manifesto both affirmed the universality of same sex love, and called for reclamation of the homosexual heritage of Chinese societies. But most significantly, the *tongzhi* manifesto codified a

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[131] Antonia Chao, "Global Metaphors and Local Strategies in the Construction of Taiwan's Lesbian Identities," *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 2, no. 4 (2000): 383.
[132] Chou, *Tongzhi*, 3.

symbolic rejection of both Western social and sexual mores and of the Western model of gay and lesbian liberation.

> The les-bi-gay movement in many Western societies is largely built upon the notion of individualism, confrontational politics, and the discourse of human rights. Certain characteristics of confrontational politics, such as through coming out and mass protests and parades may not be the best way of achieving tongzhi liberation in the family-centred, community oriented Chinese societies which stresses the importance of social harmony. In formulating the tongzhi movement strategy, we should take the specific socio-economic and cultural environment of each society into consideration.[133]

Statements such as this encapsulate the *tongzhi* movement's negative perception of globally circulating gay and lesbian discourses, its rejection of Western social mores and its preoccupation with mobilising notions of cultural difference in its search for a distinct identity. But the rejection of Western models of sexual identity goes beyond a critique of their applicability to postcolonial Chinese societies. The *tongzhi* manifesto squarely lays the blame for the homophobia that does exist in Chinese societies at the feet of imported colonial sexual moralities. Elsewhere in the manifesto, the conference participants asserted, "the introduction of sodomy law[s] in Hong Kong…was the result of British colonial rule. What was brought from the West to China was not same sex love, but the sin associated with it in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, which significantly contributed to the homophobia found in modern Chinese societies."[134]

This rejection of the West is significant, but of course, ambiguous. Many of the conceptual frameworks deployed in the creation of *tongzhi* identities are derivative of Western models or emerge in opposition to them. *Tongzhi* identities have been shaped by both globally circulating gay, lesbian and queer discourses and the locally specific social, political and cultural conditions of East Asian Chinese culture. Within the *tongzhi* movement, these discourses undergo processes of reconstruction and resignification that produce subversive and challenging social, political and cultural formations undermining of the dominance of Western discourses of homosexuality. Writing on Taiwainese *tongzhi* practises, Erni has identified a "transnational absorption, relaying and translation, of western experiences and models of analysis."[135] This is consonant with Homi Bhabha's notion of mimicry where non-Western subjectivities resist and challenge continued Western influences by resignifying Western constructions for explicitly anti-Western purposes.[136]

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[133] Chinese Tongzhi Conference, "Press Release: 1996 Chinese Tongzhi Conference," Gay Hong Kong, http://sqzm14.ust.hk/hkgay/news/manifesto.html.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Erni, "Towards Queer Cultural Rights," 142.
[136] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 86.

The *tongzhi* movement has utilised constructs within gay, lesbian and queer discourses and having reconstituted them in reference to local social, political and cultural conditions, mobilises them in the production of an identity and a politics, which is explicitly anti-western and culturally specific. Hybridised and mimetic, *tongzhi* identities, question the ability of gay, lesbian and queer discourses to explain sexual identities outside of the West. Accordingly, *tongzhi* discourse can be read (as Gikandi might suggest), both as signalling a disjuncture between global images of gay and lesbian liberation and their reception and functioning in globalized spaces, on the one hand, and, on the other, as unique identity forms in their own right.

Similarly, the international engaged by *tongzhi* identities is, in many respects, the same international with which gay and lesbian Hong Kong subjects have sought to connect. Like their cosmopolitan gay and lesbian compatriots, those who have adopted or helped define *tongzhi* identities have used their sexual identity as a way of managing the impact of international change in personal, familial and social settings. Indeed, in the Hong Kong setting there is a great deal of trafficking between the two identity groupings. Those identifying with the delineated politics of *tongzhi* identity may also access the cosmopolitan gay and lesbian spaces created by Hong Kong's urban remaking. And even the most extrovert and visible member of the new gay and lesbian communities in Hong Kong needs to negotiate familial, cultural and social structures of control. For individual subjects, the choice of self-identification can be fluid and contingent.

> The process of identity politics from the 1970s to the 1990s is not linear. The change from *long yang* to *tongxinglian zhe*, to *gay* to *lesbigay* to *tongzhi* is by no means discrete. Different labels and identities are used interchangeably by different persons in different contexts for very different reasons…These different articulations and interpretations are not exclusive or incompatible; they overlap, interact, compete, supersede, and sometimes collapse into each other.[137]

In ways similar to gay and lesbian identities, *tongzhi* politics emerge in Hong Kong society at the nexus of the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong and its emergence as a global city. Subject to many of the same forces, it is unsurprising that in some ways – most obviously their appeal to a sense of identity and politics based around same-sex sexual desire – these two modes of constructing homosexual identities and life worlds appear at least superficially similar. But an exploration of *tongzhi* politics and identities demonstrates that their unique nature emerges in different cultural spaces and under a different series of understandings about the nature and impact

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[137] Chou, *Tongzhi*, 84.

of international processes on contemporary Chinese politics and society. As such, *tongzhi* identities provide a very distinct reading of the international from that gleaned from Western style gay or lesbian identities.

As we have seen much of this takes the form of a discursive rejection of globally circulating gay and lesbian discourses, and Western-style sexual identity politics, with the Westernising imperatives of globalization figured as threatening, culturally corrosive and able to be resisted. But *tongzhi* identities also structure individual subjects' relationships to processes of globalization and processes of cultural transnationalism. For instance, Roddy Shaw, a sexuality rights activist in Hong Kong, has spoken of how *tongzhi* identities create a critical space in which subjects can evaluate and resist the impact of globalizing, colonial and national flows of change.

> I see the necessity of the Chinese tongzhi movement to reclaim its cultural tradition—that is, by deconstructing the colonialist (England) representation of Chinese tongzhi history and culture. I also see that it is just as problematic to preserve and glorify the Chinese traditions of the past without a critical examination of the particular cultural practices and institutions especially as they effect minorities such as ours.[138]

This critical intervention into the sexual and cultural practises of Chinese society is of great significance. As we have already seen, Hong Kong's transformation into the global city form has radically reorganised the spaces – physical, political, social – open to local Chinese communities. For sexual minorities, especially those unable or unwilling to access the commercial Western-style gay and lesbian sectors and communities of the city, this process of being spatially squeezed is even more urgently experienced. As Helen Leung explains, "[b]ecause of the combination of impossibly high rent and cultural expectations of filial piety, many adults in Hong Kong continue to live with, or in close proximity to, their parents. It is practically and emotionally traumatic to confront the consequences of coming out; it often means alienation from one's traditional family."[139] Due to this, Leung argues, *tongzhi* organizations in Hong Kong tend to focus more on social, cultural and religious issues and (unlike gay and lesbian politics) avoid overt calls for political change in institutional forums. Following Gordon Brett Ingram, she argues that *tongzhi* politics are best understood as "queerscapes". Rather than being about trenchant resistance of heteronormativity, queerscapes are "an aspect of the landscape, a social overlay over which the interplays between

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[138] Roddy Shaw Kwok-Wah quoted in Richard Ammon, "Gay Hong Kong 1997-2002: New Hope from an Old Closet," Richard Ammon, http://www.globalgayz.com/g-hongkong.html.
[139] Leung, "Queerscapes in Contemporary Hong Kong Cinema," 427.

assertion and marginalization of sexualities are in constant flux".[140] This interplay can be seen in the *tongzhi* rejection of confrontational politics based around the public assertion of homosexual identities. Chou describes this as a shift from the gay and lesbian strategy of "coming out" to a *tongzhi* strategy of "coming home": an attempt to find ways for sexual difference to operate within the spatial confines delimiting local homosexual men and women's life worlds both within the new global city and within the cultural and familial parameters of Hong Kong Chinese society.[141] As Chou writes, "*[t]ongzhi* is subversive from within – resources from the Western lesbigay and Chinese culture have been manipulated to negotiate their own space for same-sex eroticism…. *Tongzhi* discourse challenges the fundamental basis of Chinese culture – the kin-family – not by denying it but by queering it."[142] Partly these processes are about the rejection of what is regarded as a model of sexual identity tainted by its cultural source in the West. But the transnational implications go further. T*ongzhi* identities provide homosexual Hong Kong subjects with a way to negotiate the spatial, sexual and familial limitations of life within the public housing blocks, apartment buildings and everyday familial relations that have been reshaped by the new global city form. Chou points to strategies such as non-verbal negotiation, the breaking down of outsider-insider distinctions, the use of kin categories to construct same-sex relationships, the establishment of harmonious relationships with parents and face-saving, as ways in which *tongzhi* pursue same-sex eroticism within the embrace of Chinese cultural forms such as familial piety and existing social relationships and hierarchies.[143] In doing so, *tongzhi* men and women circumvent the negative cultural associations of overt and essentialised homosexual identities, but also manage to explore same-sex eroticism in local spaces beyond the cosmopolitan-coded gay and lesbian urban zones. This use of sexual identity components and tactics, does suggest something of the perceived power of sexual identities in general, and *tongzhi* identities in particular, to enable both postcolonial resistance and construct alternative cultural, sexual and political futures.[144]

How successful this is in practise is harder to chart; one scholar has argued that in many cases *tongzhi* seek not to reconcile their sexual erotic preferences with Chinese familial values but

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[140] Gordon Brent Ingram, "Marginality and the Landscapes of Erotic Alien(nations)," in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*, ed. Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne Marie Bouthillette, and Tolanda Retter (Seattle: Bay Press, 1997), 40-41. See also: Leung, "Queerscapes in Contemporary Hong Kong Cinema," 426.
[141] Chou, *Tongzhi*, 249-82.
[142] Ibid., 293.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Erni, for instance, reads the possibility of sexual politics "performed with the intent to challenge the compulsion to visibility" as integral to the development of new and different rights claims within postcolonial East Asia: Erni, "Towards Queer Cultural Rights," 145.

rather seek distance from the family and alternative sexuality-postitive collectivities.[145] But the fact that it is such a discursive preoccupation on the part of *tongzhi* activists says a lot about the view out into the international *from* the largely middle-class, local Chinese communities of the postcolonial city. From the *tongzhi* vantage point, the negative aspects of colonialism and Westernization appear in sharp relief. Interestingly though, the cultural resources used to resist and manage these negative processes are also largely external; derived from a Mainland China newly repossessed of Hong Kong. *Tongzhi* activists have drawn on Chinese cultural and sexual sources in an attempt to redefine the impact of that repossession in local Chinese sexual and social arenas. China, the Handover of sovereignty and the new global city form emerge here as sources of insecurity, exposing Hong Kong society to processes of international change and an increased penetration of the global. But paradoxically, both China and the global can be identified as sources of the cultural, sexual and political frameworks through which resistance to that insecurity has been processed. The global, the Western, certain aspects of cultural "Chineseness" can be resisted, reshaped or avoided. But the tools to do so often come from that which is being resisted itself. When the international, through structures like the global city, acts to reshape even the physical spaces open to families and sexed subjects, there is a certain poetic justice in its own methodologies being used against it. It is here that the final, and perhaps most unexpected, entry of *tongzhi* politics into international realms becomes visible. For *tongzhi* politics have spread well beyond Hong Kong, to other Chinese urban settings.[146] Chao writes:

> Probably due to its nearly universal intelligibility [in Chinese culture], the term propagated instantly to nearly all Chinese societies in Southeast Asia, including those in Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand. Once again, the traffic of the term 'comrade' suggests a transnational pattern of sexual cultural products, which cannot be subsumed under the paradigm of Altman's more narrowly conceived model of Americanization."[147]

I have more to say below about the nature of those spaces where *tongzhi* identities have been most enthusiastically adopted. Yet Chao's identification of the transnational spread of *tongzhi* politics and identities in ways that circumvent the accepted logic of Americanization and a unilinear transmission of sexual identities from the West to the East is significant. For it also, paradoxically, reaffirms Hong Kong's position as a global city; though perhaps not in the ways in which the

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[145] Ibid.: 143.
[146] Martin, *Situating Sexualities*, 23.
[147] Chao, "Global Metaphors and Local Strategies," 383.

promoters of the brand program had anticipated. Shirley Lim has argued that the measure of a global city is not the extent to which it consumes globally circulating products, identities or cultures, but the extent to which *it* is consumed globally. She argues that Hong Kong film is consumed globally, its stars, directors and filmic techniques now entering other film cultures such as Hollywood and Bollywood. It is this provision of cultural material back *to* the global system, she argues, that makes Hong Kong a global city. [148] A similar argument can now be made with regard to *tongzhi* sexual identities. Their spread regionally, transnationally and globally also acts as a marker of the reach of Hong Kong as a world city and the global movements of its sexed subjects and their identity formations.

If we can read gay and lesbian identities in Hong Kong as being essentially cosmopolitan in nature, and *tongzhi* identities as derived largely (though not exclusively), from local life worlds, my final example of sexuality providing a means of coming to terms with, and impacting, transnational processes, comes from a very different source. Given the paucity of information, much of what I have to say here is necessarily speculative. It is important, however, that instead of focussing only on those Hong Kong cosmopolitan and middle classes who have largely benefited from globalization and Hong Kong's global economic position, analysis at least attempts to examine the ways in which members of those groups variously understood as subaltern or subjugated participate in forming individual, sexually mediated understandings of the international. In doing so, we can flesh out the argument between those who see the class divisions of the global city as fundamentally disempowering to those least able to afford social mobility and those who see the new spatial opportunities created in urban spaces by globalizing processes as productive sites of resistance and new forms of identity.

In 2004, as part of its special-issue coverage of homosexuality in Asia, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* ran a small story covering what it depicted as a new and widespread phenomenon of female Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong forming same-sex sexual relationships. Describing the new visibility of same-sex couples in the regular Sunday gathering of Filipina maids in the city's Statue Square,[149] the author comments that "the large lesbian culture stands out: Scores of tomboys in baggy jeans, men's shirts and buzzcuts camp out on the streets with their

[148] Shirley Geok-Lin Lim, "Regionalism, English Narrative, and Singapore as Home and Global City," in *Postcolonial Urbanism: Southeast Asian Cities and Global Processes*, ed. Ryan Bishop, John Phillips, and Wei Wei Yeo (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 218-19.
[149] See my discussion of this, above.

girlfriends."[150] The newsmagazine article presents the move of these domestic labourers to Hong Kong as fundamentally positive, enabling Filipina women "a chance to freely explore" sexual identities that (in the author's logic) are presumably are essential and pre-existing. It continues this redemption narrative by presenting employment as a maid in Hong Kong and the formation of a same-sex relationship with another Filipina as a route to economic self-sufficiency and freedom from abusive relationships with Filipino men.

While the presentation of the material in the article is dubious, the processes it identifies are of significant interest to the sorts of arguments I have been advancing throughout this chapter. They signal the ways in which the global city-space of Hong Kong and the rapid growth of a newly-rich Hong Kong Chinese middle class has created economic opportunities for women from developing countries in South East Asia but also acted to shape – both positively and negatively - the social, political and even sexual life worlds open to those women. More importantly, though, it shows how the women themselves are drawing on sexuality – both sexual identity and sexual practise – as a means of negotiating the racial and social inequalities of Hong Kong society, the gender disparities of Filipino culture and even the differences in development between Hong Kong and the Philippines. The homosexualities that the article describes appear to be defined largely along gender lines, the women modelling their relationships along perceived heteronormative lines "with tomboys…taking on both the "macho" physical appearance and responsibilities of a man."[151] And while some of these processes are about the adoption of lesbian or other female homosexual identities, others are simply about the exploration of sexual possibilities in a new place. As a Filipina lesbian activist recounts, these women "may not call themselves lesbian. But because they are away from their families, these women have space to explore possibilities other than heterosexuality."[152]

The transnational aspect of these sexualities is the most interesting for my present purposes. The movement from the Philippines to Hong Kong takes these women into the rigid economically delineated space of the global city, a space where, as the article acknowledges they are fundamentally second-class. The Filipina women become subject to the class divisions created by Hong Kong's rapid modernisation and the wealth inequalities subsisting between Hong Kong and

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[150] Geoffrey A. Fowler, "New Home, New Beginning," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 28 October 2004, 62.

[151] Ibid., 63. On gender-structured homosexualities more broadly see: Barry D. Adam, "Age, Structure and Sexuality: Reflections on the Anthropological Evidence on Homosexual Relations," *Journal of Homosexuality* 11, no. 3 (1986), Benjamin Dykes, "Problems in Defining Cross-Cultural 'Kinds of Homosexuality' - and a Solution," *Journal of Homosexuality* 38, no. 3 (2000): 2, Stephen O. Murray, *Oceanic Homosexualities* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1992), xv-xvi.

[152] Julie Palaganas as cited in Fowler, "New Home, New Beginning," 62-63.

the Philippines. But they have shown a remarkable readiness to use the opportunities created by the cosmopolitanism and sexual opportunities of the global city to navigate international issues. These include the pressures of membership in the Filipino diaspora, the conditionalities of return to the Philippines after a stint working in Hong Kong, or even the social isolation of being part of one of the world's largest migrant labour forces. For instance, the article highlights the comparative wealth of former maids who return to the Philippines. Distance from national and cultural structures of control, it argues, as well as comparative affluence allows domestic workers to circumvent many of the codes of heteronormativity that mark Filipino society and even negotiate re-entry into that society on terms that can include acceptance of a same-sex partner. The entry into the international, both through migration and through participation (even as a lowly-paid labourer) in the spaces of the global city provides Filipina women with a range of possibilities – sexual, personal and political – that they would not otherwise be able to access. Indeed, implicit in much of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* article is the perception that life as a domestic worker in the global city is, in some cases at least, a life within the international realm, complete with its contingent politics of access to cosmopolitan, local and subaltern places and spaces. As is the case for almost all the sexual subjects I have discussed, the global city and the spaces of postcolonial modernity that these women inhabit and serve are sites both of repression and of opportunity. Nevertheless, the repressions they exert are not absolute and the opportunities they provide are a rich source both of personal imagining and of coming to terms with a world of rapid change and global inequality.

Read in concert, the materials I have introduced in this chapter demonstrate the way in which Hong Kong sexual identities, and the sexual practises shaped and enabled by them, have become a domain in which international processes are resisted, embraced and refashioned. The international that these sexual identities engage and call into being is present and expressed through citizens' most private, intimate choices and self-imaginings. These developments provide us with the opportunity to rethink the international away from the sorts of state-level conflicts that have for so long dominated international relations thinking, in ways that acknowledge that international processes and globalizing flows are not unidirectional in nature or directed only by the agency of the state. While it is undeniable that such processes fundamentally reshape local populations and life worlds, the reading of Hong Kong sexual identities that I have presented suggests that, in turn,

local populations, their identities and practises, actively intervene in and help define the nature, reach and impact of international processes themselves. This is more than the global/local dialogue identified by certain scholars of globalization, or the more fashionable concept of "glocality" that has been used to describe the interplay of global forces and local settings.[153] A reading of Hong Kong sexual identities suggests that individuals and groups are using sexual identities born out of these global-local encounters to direct and manage the very international processes out of which they arise.

For gay and lesbian Hong Kong subjects, enmeshed in the space of opportunity, compromise and transience that is the global city, sexuality becomes a way of articulating a claim both to international space but also to globally circulating politics, identities and lifestyles. For those who identify with *tongzhi* politics and identities, resisting and hybridising many of those very same identity components provides them with powerful tools to make sense of, and assert agency over, external processes of change such as colonialism, globalization or development. Indeed, in ways quite contrary to what can be imputed as the motives of Hong Kong's political managers, *tongzhi* identities have emerged as a unique Hong Kong "export", their increasing regional and global ubiquity a new marker of the city's status as a world hub. Finally, for Filipina domestic labourers, entry into the international through labour migration provides a space of homosexual opportunity that spans both Hong Kong and Filipino spaces and provides a means to come to terms with global inequalities of gender, socio-economic class and national development. Each of these examples suggests that from the broader level of identity politics, and from the points of view of the individual subjects who draw on such politics to articulate personal claims, the international appears differently. Much of this can be attributed to the operations of class: a postcolonial analysis must always be conscious of the fact that the world is represented differently – or often cannot be represented at all – from varying class positions.[154] Nevertheless, what is significant in the examples I have given is that cosmopolitan, local and migrant labourer alike have used concepts of sexual identity to shape personal and communal readings of the international. From each of these positions, the international appears variously imbued with meaning – as a space of opportunity or

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[153] See: Lim, *Alternatives in Transition*, Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake, eds., *Global / Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996).

[154] This most obviously refers to Spivak's famous question "Can the Subaltern Speak?": Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Macmillan, 1988). However, Marx and Engels' belief that bourgeois subjectivities will inevitably follow the spread of capitalist forms of production globally also springs to mind here: Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1888 English ed. (London: The Electric Book Company, 1998), 14.

threat, as bearer of tides of cultural imperialism or political colonialism, as destroyer of local cultures or bringer of a new global vitality and purpose. More significantly, the international is not a domain remote from individual lives or subjectivities. It is malleable, able to be bent to different purposes and politics. The international is something lived in and through; modes of life imbue it with meaning, helping, in turn, to sketch out its furthest boundaries and map its domains. Individuals and sexual communities, in their politics and organising, call into being new ways of reading the international and reshape existing, more conventional understandings.

In many ways, the topics I have raised here – sovereignty, colonialism, imperialism, flows of economic globalization – are familiar subjects for international analysis. But reading these processes from and through categories of sexual identity reveals that the systemic, disciplinary and programmatic understandings with which scholars of the international are used to dealing only ever describe part of the story. While I do not go so far as to suggest that sexuality should be regarded as the missing keystone of international analysis' arch, the materials and methodologies I have introduced suggest that conventional theoretical approaches to the international require supplementing with an analysis of social geography and individual and social life worlds. To take Hong Kong as an example, what does it mean, for instance, that political decision makers, the societies they govern and the transnational exigencies they confront and must manage, all intersect with the colonial and postcolonial histories, processes of urban renewal and class based divisions that have shaped my readings of sexuality? Taking questions like this seriously demonstrates how the move into the personal, the social or even the sexual, fleshes out and adds nuance to disciplinary attempts to describe or explain international politics. Even the most "progressive" of the mainstream schools of international relations, constructivism, has largely been concerned with tracing how identities, norms and culture feed into state behaviour, with the nation-state remaining the privileged actor in the international domain.[155] My analysis here decentres the state and privileges the individual and the social, suggesting that while international politics may well impact on the individual, and that individuals can and do influence state behaviour, that the state does not hold a monopoly on either access to, or the definition of, international spaces or their politics. In ways that often circumvent the state – or act contrary to its interests – individual subjects and the social communities they form are intervening in, reshaping and redefining the international for their own purposes and politics. Indeed, the processes I have identified here suggest that the individual

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[155] Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It," *International Organisation* 46, no. 2 (1992).

sexual body, its practices, identities, politics and presuppositions, stands as a rich source of information about the international as well as being a key site where international processes are articulated, resisted and refashioned.

These processes are clearly spatially determined. Indeed, my arguments here can be read as being as much a study in spatiality as in sexuality. The provision and character of varying spaces and the nature of access to them clearly has profound impacts on restricting or endorsing certain forms of behaviour or identity. Spatial strategies, or those "separation[s] among spheres of activity that…[give] places their meaning and value",[156] are of central significance both to articulations of identity and to the tactics of politics. These processes can operate at the national or transnational level, as can be seen where Hong Kong homosexual identities became interwoven with debates about decolonization and urban change, or at the high level of specificity seen in the individual homosexual identities I have discussed. Either way, their influential nature makes them an obvious focus of study for those interested in uncovering underlying power relations and disrupting unquestioned narratives of dominance and subjugation.

Much of what I have explored in this chapter has centred on the unique nature of the varying spaces, and their meanings, politics and outlines, which together make up Hong Kong. This is perhaps most apparent in the fact that Hong Kong has never been permitted to emerge politically in the form of the nation-state. Instead it may be regarded as a "not-quite" state, possessing many of the criteria of state-hood but failing in many of the areas – most notably defence, foreign diplomacy and international recognition - deemed critical by international relations theory. We must be careful when using such a phrase to describe Hong Kong –and other geo-spatial formations like it around the world – to not be caught in a mode of thinking that concedes that the state is the only logical outcome of developmental or political processes. Rather my use of the term here seeks to signal the new, broader relationships that are emerging between global cities and their regions, in both the Pearl River Delta and elsewhere around the world. Yet perhaps it is the "not quite" status that has allowed such a diverse range of sexual identities – and their international meanings and entanglements – to emerge in Hong Kong. As I have tracked in previous chapters, the postcolonial state's interests in controlling sex and sexuality and harnessing them to state goals of biological and cultural reproduction and economic and population growth

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[156] Michael J. Shapiro, *Reading the Postmodern Polity: Political Theory as Textual Practice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 87.

often acts to restrict the development of spaces where sexual diversity can thrive. Nationalism too, with its ambiguous and often hypocritical promises of gender equality and emancipation from colonial modernity, has played its part in limiting the possibilities of performing sexual difference. It also acts to restrict political organisation in ways that might bypass or erode the state's exercise of power in those areas (such as participation in international domains) from which it derives its legitimacy and over which it jealously guards its monopolies. It would naïve to suggest that none of these factors have come into play in Hong Kong environments. Yet, it is arguable that their effect is diminished by Hong Kong's status as the not-quite state. A useful exercise here is to compare Hong Kong's diverse modes of sexual expression, and the range of political ends to which they have been bent, with the aggressive policies of heteronormativity and ongoing attempts to prevent the emergence of politicised homosexual identities that I examined in my earlier discussion of Singapore (that epitome of the strong postcolonial Asian state).

Tracing the full impact of the spatial ambivalences of the "not quite" state on sexualities, and they ways in which they connect out to the international is beyond the ambit of this chapter. It is worth, however, briefly tracing the ways in which these unique spatialities interface with ideas about both sexuality and the international. To conclude, therefore, I pose a series of speculative, and I hope provocative, questions. Foremost among these is a questioning of how the nation-state's preoccupation with biological reproduction in order to replenish the ranks of the citizenry might function differently in non-state spaces such as Hong Kong. Does the very fact of being a non-state entity, or a globally impacted international zone, lessen or heighten the tensions that lead to governmental intervention into areas of sexuality, reproduction and gendered behaviour? In the Hong Kong case, the debates have largely been about the capacity of Hong Kong to absorb those Mainland Chinese citizens who have sought residency in the territory following the Handover. Fear of being swamped by new fellow-citizens of the PRC who are ethnically, if not politically or socio-economically, similar to Hong Kong Chinese is the spectre that haunts Hong Kong population policy, expressed in debates over issues such as right-of-abode and the need to define distinctive Hong Kong cultures and identities. At the same time, awareness of a glut of potential residents of the "right" ethnic type and citizenship, may well help explain the Hong Kong government's lack of concern over the emergence of homosexual identities and politics that explicitly engage such issues as Hong Kong's new national and international relationships. Being located in the not quite state

may thus allow Hong Kong subjects to explore more imaginative and politically productive sexual practises and modes of expression.

This touches on a second category of questions. Hong Kong, perpetually colonised and denied independent statehood, is nonetheless a uniquely *transnational* space. Explicitly configured as a global crossroads shaped by a unique and ambiguous experience of postcoloniality, Hong Kong still derives much of its sense of identity and security by turning to international and cosmopolitan meanings. Historically, it is arguable that spaces formed primarily in dialogue with international (as opposed to national) processes have proved to be spaces of sexual creativity and opportunity. I touched briefly on this in my comparative reading of Singapore and Shanghai's earlier histories of sexual diversity and cosmopolitan self-definition. But an example from outside of the Asian region may shed further light on such issues, and their implications for potential new approaches to international theory. In his examination of the "interzone" of Tangier, an international city-space ruled by a coalition of European powers until its reintegration with Morocco in 1956, Greg Mullins has argued that Tangier emerged as

> a place so scattered in its allegiances that it looked toward no focal point – not Europe, but not exactly Morocco; not the West, but not exactly the East; a place where sex between men could take place, but not exactly a place free of sexual constraint, Tangier provided the site for a productive confusion of binary logics and preconceptions. In the free trade zone of Tangier, freedoms began to multiply. With the breakdown of national structures, kinship relations, ethical systems, and disciplinary regimes also began to decay and to reappear in new forms.[157]

Mullins' analysis builds from Tangier's emergence as a cosmopolitan, internationalised zone: a city able to attract both local and foreign authors and artists (a forerunner of what today's managerial texts would call the "creative class"), a space where diverse sexual identities and practises could be pursued by both locals and foreigners, and a mediated space between Europe and the East. Reading Tangier in this way helps demonstrate how the international can appear differently when viewed from those spaces, like Tangier and Hong Kong, that are not bound strictly within the tight embrace of Westphalian statehood. Mullins' work suggests that "interzones", those spaces that in some way exceed or escape the definitions of nationalism and statehood, act to provide their subjects with a range of discursive tools – variously transnational, colonial, postcolonial or global – that enable more creative and productive personal choices and engagements with transnational

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[157] Greg Mullins, *Colonial Affairs: Bowles, Burroughs and Chester Write Tangier* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 5.

processes. Whether Hong Kong retains its "international" status or special autonomy after the expiry of the 50 years negotiated between Britain and China for the maintenance of Hong Kong's distinctive political and legal system remains to be seen. Indeed, in the Tangier case, Mullins appears to believe that modernisation and nationalisation have acted to rob the city of the unique spatial nature – and consequent sexual-political possibilities - that existed during its time as an interzone.[158] For Hong Kong, its future in this regard is as much about its ongoing role within the confines of an increasingly modernising and globally assertive China, as it is about the outcome of another recurring argument over international change: the destiny of the nation state form in a world dominated by global capital and transnational corporations. Whether the global city form will serve as a form of insulation from the forces of statehood or nationalism, and whether those forces themselves will prove resurgent or redundant as a result of the pressures of globalization, it seems obvious that these debates will shape the future role of the territory, and the sexual and political possibilities of its citizenry.

In this light, it must be seen as significant that the sexual identities that most directly intervene in international processes of globalization – *tongzhi* identities – are also most closely associated with spaces of compromised or limited statehood. The ambiguously postcolonial Special Autonomous Region of Hong Kong, the new economic and political vibrancy of Chinese Special Economic Zones such as Shanghai, and even the urban centres of a Taiwan whose independence and sovereignty are fundamentally in question, each appear to be fertile sources for alternative sexual self-imaginings. It is not that the usual structures of nationalism and sovereignty do not apply in these interzonal spaces. Indeed, in many ways they are perhaps more keenly felt and more vigorously asserted. But I would suggest that the sexual diversity operating in each of these interstitial and politically ambiguous areas can be partly explained by the fact that in each of them at least some of the normal rules of statehood and nationalism are suspended or work quite differently to their operation in the classic Westphalian state. To take just one of these examples – that of Taiwan – there exists a rich seam of information on how *tongzhi* and queer Taiwanese sexual identities, their bodily and political expressions and their spatial situations, have been used to negotiate Taiwan's ambiguous relationship with both statehood and the ambiguities of post-martial

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[158] Ibid., 20.

law rule as well as transnationally oriented processes such as colonialism, globalization and nationalism.[159]

And it is nationalism that leads me to the last of the issues raised by these indeterminate spaces. For while sovereignty remains the supposed arbiter of state behaviour in international domains, it is nationalism that usually delimits the range of sexual and political opportunities open to national subjects. The operation of nationalism in the "not quite" state is thus a useful site of investigation for those tracking the diversity and political utility of sexual identities. Again, an example from Northern Africa can help illuminate these issues. Jarrod Hayes has studied the connections between sexuality and nationalism in the Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia) as Francophone novelists began to articulate particular visions of national identity in the lead up to independence after World War II. Hayes' analysis identifies a tension between dominant national discourses, which presented the nation as defined by its exclusions, and the visions of nation presented by those novelists who sought to use ideas about sexuality and gender to shape the anti-colonial struggle to meet goals of heterogeneity, inclusiveness and sexual as well as political liberation.

> When Maghrebian authors formulate representations of homosexuality, sodomy, homoeroticism, lesbianism, cross-dressing, the joys of emasculation, women's resistance, public unveiling, and feminist guerrilla warfare, they do not merely challenge sexual taboos, sexual normativity and patriarchy (which they do); they also reveal the queerness of the Nation. They articulate a heterogeneous Nation that national elites cannot use as a weapon against its own citizens. Many Maghrebian novels, while affirming the necessity to consolidate national identity, nevertheless recognise that any model of identity is impossible to embody fully. They attempt, therefore, without rejecting identity altogether, to articulate a national identity that is heterogeneous in relation to languages, ethnicities, sexualities, and religions, and that questions any totalizing binary opposition to the former colonizer.[160]

For the novelists Hayes studies, the struggle is both against the colonial power, but also against the restrictive versions of postcolonial nationalism pursued by anticolonial political elites. Identities – national, political, sexual – were perceived as central to this struggle; their imaginative conception central to the negotiation of the decolonization process. There are obvious parallels here with the

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[159] A provisional list of sources here would include: Erni, "Towards Queer Cultural Rights.", John Nguyet Erni and Anthony J. Spires, "Glossy Subjects: *G & L Magazine* and 'Tongzhi' Cultural Visibility in Taiwan," *Sexualities* 4, no. 1 (2001), Fran Martin, "From Citizenship to Queer Counterpublic: Reading Taipei's New Park," *Communal / Plural: Journal of Transnational and Cross-Cultural Studies* 8, no. 1 (2000), Martin, *Situating Sexualities*, Fran Martin, "At the Intersection of the Global and the Local: Representations of Male Homosexuality in Fictions by Pai Hsien-Yung, Li Ang, Chu Tien-Wen and Chi Ta Wei," *Postcolonial Studies: Culture, Politics, Economy* 6, no. 2 (2003), Xiaopei Hei, "Chinese Women *Tongzhi* Organizing in the 1990s," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 3, no. 3 (2002).

[160] Jarrod Hayes, *Queer Nations: Marginal Sexualities in the Maghreb* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 16.

deployment of homosexual identities as markers of distinctiveness, social diversity and political liberalism in Hong Kong films before the Handover of sovereignty in 1997. But the lesson must also be about the creative potentials of nationalism *prior* to the emergence of the modern, postcolonial nation-state. Here it is perhaps constructive to talk about the "not *yet* state". The creative flow of identities, sexualities and politics, and their playful engagements of international processes such as decolonization, nationalism and sovereignty, seem to be heightened in those cases where there is still an option to influence the shape of the potential nation or territory. Sadly, it seems that once these territories become nationalised or thrust, in the form of the Westphalian state, into an international system defined by and for Western powers, the creative possibilities open to the citizenry to imagine their own political and sexual life worlds become severely limited, and offered along largely Western lines. This can be about the national embrace of heteronormativity for the ends of the state, or a diminution in the range of sexual identities open to subjects in the face of globalizing sexual subjectivities. Whatever the end point may be, it is encouraging that in the present global conjuncture at least, spaces like Hong Kong offer us all a glimpse of the political potential inherent in the project of imagining our sexualities, our politics, and ourselves, along different lines and towards different futures.

EPIDEMIOLOGIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL

The world tells many stories about Thailand and its encounter with HIV/AIDS; stories of sex and drugs, of death and degeneracy, of the affairs of states and the politics of medical intervention. This chapter begins by juxtaposing two of these narratives. These external responses to the Thai experience of HIV and AIDS can tell us a great deal about how understandings of sex and disease operate to define different forms of knowledge about Thailand, its people, and their access or subjection to particular kinds of international politics and flows. Indeed, knowledge - the ways in which it is constructed, consumed and debated, as well as the often violent and unexpected ways in which it reshapes bodies, lives and societies – stands as the key concern of this chapter. Later sections explore the ways in which new knowledge about the international emerges from societies caught up in the processes of change; change such as that caused, uncovered or impacted by HIV and AIDS. Reading HIV and AIDS in this way builds upon the insights provided by earlier chapters' readings of sexuality in contemporary Asia. That is to say, engaging with HIV and AIDS shapes a more critical analysis of the ways in which dominant discourses – of sexuality, of medicine and of international politics - are carried around the globe. It is undeniable that these discourses are reshaped by their engagement with cultural, political, national and behavioural peculiarities. Equally, though, an analysis that focuses on issues such as those raised by HIV/AIDS can help to demonstrate some of the issues for international theory that are raised in the dialogue between local agency and forms of Western modernity. Controversially for postcolonial analyses, this involves shedding light on the ways in which, for many in the developing or newly-industrialised worlds, rejecting certain aspects of modernity may be a retrograde, even damaging, step. Towards the end of this chapter, and by way of a lead-in to the thesis' overall conclusion, I explore some of the implications of these insights, both for students of the international and for those scholars who would use materials on sexuality within international theory.

Thailand is a useful starting point from which to explore these issues because it has – for reasons we explore in some detail below - come to represent and help structure a series of meanings about HIV/AIDS' impact and operation, both globally and in the Asian region. Obviously, many of these meanings have had to do with issues of sexuality. Consequently, I have

consciously chosen to structure my arguments in this chapter around notions of sexual behaviour and human sexuality. I do not wish to downplay other issues of vital importance to an understanding of HIV, its transmission and the construction of social meanings around it (such as injecting drug use, contaminated blood products or vertical transmission from mother to baby). But a tighter focus on issues of sexuality allows for more dialogue between the ideas raised in this chapter and those have made elsewhere in the thesis. Most obviously, this involves drawing links between the Thai encounter with HIV/AIDS and other instances where issues of sexuality and pathology have become interwoven with international issues. The choice to work with Thai materials and on the international politics of HIV/AIDS seems to require such a broader, comparative approach. The Thai experience of HIV is a strong example of how diseases are poor respecters of national boundaries, patriotic affiliations or socio-cultural differences. Thus, while this chapter may be grounded in a particular national space, it ranges well beyond it, reflecting the regional and global circulation both of HIV itself and of the international meanings it both creates and conveys.

Our first story starts on an American college campus. Vincent Del Casino has written of the challenges involved in teaching American geography students about HIV and AIDS in Thailand.[1] He talks of how he instructs his students about the epidemic through different metaphors of scale: global and regional flows, national experiences, differences between domestic regions, and the impact of HIV/AIDS in what he terms "daily activity space."[2] The teaching Del Casino describes is strongly informed by postcolonial perspectives. Indeed, his calls for geographers to be aware of their own prejudices and to attend to the local and the particular accords with the sorts of analyses that have made up the body of this thesis so far. But it is not Del Casino's unique contribution to geographic pedagogy that is of importance to us here. Rather, our analysis begins with the preconceptions about Thailand that his students bring to the university classroom.

Del Casino recounts showing his students an outline map with the various provinces of Thailand shaded according to a key where the lightest shade represents the lowest prevalence of AIDS cases in that region's population and the darkest the greatest. The map's shading reveals that

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[1] Vincent J. Del Casino, Jr., "Scaling Health and Healthcare: Re-Presenting Thailand's HIV/AIDS Epidemic with World Regional Geography Students," *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 28, no. 2 (2004).
[2] Ibid.: 338-43.

the highest prevalence of AIDS is found in rural areas, especially in the north of the country. Asking his students to explain this phenomenon, Del Casino writes of their responses that,

> [s]tudents often find it curious that Bangkok appears underrepresented on the map, which often belies their attempt to map the US experience of HIV/AIDS as a largely 'urban' phenomenon onto another place....Some students note that northern Thailand is located in the infamous 'Golden Triangle' bordering Burma and Laos, a historical site of heroin production, suggesting a link between drug use and HIV transmission. Others draw on their own geographic imagination of Thailand as a site of commercial sex and suggest that prostitution plays an important role in the represented rates, taking a global (mis)representation of Thailand and placing it on top of the map in front of them. Despite this, few students can then explain how commercial sex in Thailand might relate to the rather uneven distribution of AIDS prevalence rates in the country.[3]

Del Casino uses his students' initial confusion to draw them into a discussion of the functioning of HIV and AIDS in Thailand. He highlights the time lag that exists between an individual's initial infection with HIV and their being diagnosed with AIDS, and explores the domestic and regional circumstances that impact both the transmission of the disease and the social and political responses to it. For our purposes, though, it is sufficient to highlight the fact that Del Casino's world regional geography students - a comparatively well-educated segment of the Western populace - hold particular, and highly sexualised, preconceptions of Thailand. In the imaginary of these young men and women, Thailand is regarded as a space of lax sexual morality, of commercial sexual activity, sex tourism and illicit drug taking, and of sexually transmissible infections, centred on representations of the fascinating but dangerous, even deadly, fleshpots of its capital, Bangkok.

Del Casino's students are certainly not alone in their views. Indeed, they keep company with a host of others, including journalists, politicians, scholars and activists, who persist in reading and representing Thailand as a space – if not the space *par excellence* – of Asian sexual permissiveness and of diseased and dangerous sexualities. Peter Jackson and Nerida Cook have argued that "Thailand is now an icon in broader discussion of sexuality among Westerners, and an increasing number of observers of the sexual routinely incorporate accounts of the country."[4] They go on to explore the connections between "Thailand's sex industry, the development of one of Asia's earliest and initially most virulent HIV/AIDS epidemics and the way in which these influence even academic Western imaginations."[5]

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[3] Ibid.: 335-37.
[4] Peter A. Jackson and Nerida M. Cook, "Desiring Constructs: Transforming Sex/Gender Orders in Twentieth Century Thailand," in *Genders and Sexualities in Modern Thailand*, ed. Peter A. Jackson and Nerida M. Cook (Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 1999), 1-2.
[5] Ibid., 2.

We can begin to see here how ideas about sex and sexuality contribute to the perception and management of national spaces or communities in international theory and political practise. In many parts of the world, knowledge about HIV has (primarily because of its modes of transmission), come to be linked in popular understanding with issues of sexuality. And in the globally circulating ideas about Thailand identified by Del Casino, Jackson and Cook, Thailand's national image is fundamentally linked to such notions of sexual permissiveness and infectious disease. The attempts by successive Thai governments firstly to access global capital and tourist economies and secondly to draw on international expertise to help manage a burgeoning HIV epidemic have contributed to this dual sexualisation and pathologisation of Thailand in the eyes of external observers. Chris Lyttleton, for example, argues that "[i]nternational commentary prompted by AIDS has further profiled Thailand's reputation as a country where national identity is closely synonymous with a glistening and amorphous sexuality."[6]

Many scholars have asserted that the Thai government's early reluctance to deal with issues of HIV and AIDS in the late 1980s can be explained by their desire to reject these negative, sexualised understandings and project a positive, modern and progressive international image of the Thai nation abroad.[7] Thomas D'Agnes writes of government attempts to encourage Western tourists to visit Thailand in the late 1980s, culminating in an extravagant "Visit Thailand Year" campaign, promoted globally in 1987. There was a concerted effort to ensure that both local and foreign concerns about HIV and AIDS were downplayed, with the government believing that "even the slightest hint of such a threat would jeopardize the potential tourist bonanza that "Visit Thailand Year" promised."[8] Tourism had emerged as one of Thailand's largest sources of foreign income, and an old canard of classical international relations - the pursuit of "national interest" - was increasingly seen to require both denial of the growing number of HIV infections and protection of certain Thai sexual economies.

Key to this was a seemingly pragmatic self-Orientalism, colouring the images of Thailand promoted abroad and designed to encourage Western tourist and investment flows.[9] This was

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[6] Chris Lyttleton, "Framing Thai Sexuality in the Age of AIDS - Introduction," *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 6, no. 3 (1995): 137.

[7] Werasit Sittitrai et al., "Thai Sexual Behaviour and Risk of HIV Infection: A Report of the 1990 Survey of Partner Relations and Risk of HIV Infection in Thailand," (Bangkok: Thai Red Cross Society and Institute of Population Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1992), 9.

[8] Thomas D'Agnes, *From Condoms to Cabbages: An Authorized Biography of Mechai Viravaidya* (Bangkok: Post Books, 2001), 319. See also: Peter A. Jackson, *Dear Uncle Go: Male Homosexuality in Thailand* (Bangkok, Thailand: Bua Luang Books, 1995), 282-83.

[9] This worked in ways similar to those we identified in our earlier discussion of the Singapore Girl figure. The creator of the Singapore Girl image discusses this with regard to the Orientalism of Thai Airways International's advertising at: Ian

informed and supplemented by a large and visible commercial sex industry. In such circumstances, advancing the national interest seemed to require keeping quiet about HIV. In the eyes of political elites and economic managers, speaking of HIV and AIDS "stigmatized Thailand and undermined the country's lucrative tourist industry, in which sex entertainment played a conspicuous part."[10] Much later, the country's attempts to manage its HIV epidemic in line with recommendations of bodies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and to apply pragmatic and scientifically based technologies of public health and disease surveillance to limit the spread and social impact of the disease would further contribute to globally circulating visions of Thailand as a space both of sex and of suffering. Chris Beyrer writes of these latter-day connections between HIV, sexuality and national image, arguing that: "for better or worse, the openness of the Thais to publicity about the AIDS crisis has also meant that if AIDS has an Asian face, for most people that face is Thai."[11]

These external representations of the Thai nation are not merely matters of domestic sensitivity. They fundamentally affect the ways in which other nations, non-governmental bodies and even individual foreign citizens think of, and relate to Thailand.[12] They influence the politics of international health policy, the factors influencing business decision-making, and even the reasons behind an individual tourist's decision about whether, and on what terms, to visit the country. Indeed, if we take seriously the ways that such representations inform a nation's international image we can see that even those structures that might appear to be very much shaped by diplomacy and *realpolitik*, are in fact often coloured by understandings of sex, disease and sexuality. In making such an argument, I follow those feminist scholars who have made similar arguments regarding the impacts of masculinism and gender hierarchies in international relations.[13] Similarly, postcolonial readings of transnational processes have long been concerned with identifying practises where

Batey, *Asian Branding: A Great Way to Fly* (Singapore: Prentice Hall, 2002), 117. Batey implicitly criticises the Thai airline for moving *away* from these Orientalist depictions.

[10] Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, "Biography of Mechai Viravaidya," Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, http://www.rmaf.org.ph/Awardees/Biography/BiographyViravaidyaMec.htm. For a disturbing overview of the sorts of Orientalist tropes that feed into Western consumption of the commercial Thai sex industry see Dennis O'Rourke's infamous 1991 film *The Good Woman of Bangkok* and related commentary in: Chris Berry, Annette Hamilton, and Laleen Jayamanne, eds., *The Filmmaker and the Prostitute: Dennis O'Rourke's The Good Woman of Bangkok* (Sydney: Power Publications, Power Institute of Fine Arts, The University of Sydney, 1996).

[11] Chris Beyrer, *War in the Blood: Sex, Politics and AIDS in Southeast Asia* (London: Zed Books, 1998), 34-35.

[12] An early example of such thinking about national images, from the realm of Cold War conflict resolution, can be found at: K. E. Boulding, "National Images and International Systems," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 3, no. 2 (1959). Boulding's concluding comments resonate just as strongly for today's world: "We have no secure place to stand where we are, and we live in a time when intellectual investment in developing more adequate international images and theories of international systems may bear an enormous rate of return in human welfare."

[13] See illustratively: Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), Christine Sylvester, *Feminist International Relations: An Unfinished Journey* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Georgina Waylen, *Gender in Third World Politics* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1996).

particular tropes (usually of passivity, degeneracy, sexual permissiveness or racial inferiority) have been ascribed to non-Western spaces in order to support their conquest or control.[14] Such accounts have, for instance, uncovered how the colonial conquest of non-Western territory was often described – in both fictional and official accounts - in metaphorically sexual terms.[15] Elsewhere, postcolonial scholars have highlighted how the encounter with gendered and sexual difference during the colonial era was used as a justification for colonial control, the imposition of new forms of identity and behaviour, and as providing a wealth of sexual opportunities for Western sexual sojourners.[16]

Reading HIV/AIDS – both in Thailand, and elsewhere - encourages exploration of this area in more depth. A clear relationship can often be identified between traditional justifications for international policy or action – such as military doctrine or economic managerialism – and those international threats seen to be posed by sex and disease. In April 2000, for example, the Clinton administration officially designated HIV/AIDS a threat to American national security, stating that infectious diseases such as HIV would "complicate US and global security over the next 20 years."[17] The administration went on to argue that these diseases would "endanger US citizens at home and abroad, threaten US armed forces deployed overseas, and exacerbate social and political instability in key countries and regions in which the United States has significant interests."[18] In the National Intelligence Council report in which these arguments were made, Thailand was repeatedly referenced, both in terms of its own infectious disease challenges, but also in ways that presented the Thai experience as an illustrative template for occurrences in other parts of Asia and the developing world. Documents such as this reflect a belief on the part of many external observers that the global threat of HIV/AIDS – and the Thai epidemic in particular – was one requiring urgent Western involvement in order to safeguard strategic and economic interests both at home and abroad. Also making an appearance in the US report were ideas about dangerous sexual

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[14] Phillip Darby, "Introduction," in *At the Edge of International Relations: Postcolonialism, Gender and Dependency*, ed. Phillip Darby (London and New York: Pinter, 1997), 8-9.

[15] McClintock's account of Africa as the body of a woman being metaphorically raped/penetrated by white adventurers in Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* is perhaps the most obvious example. See: Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 1-17.

[16] On the first point see, for instance: Philip Holden, *Modern Subjects/Colonial Texts: Hugh Clifford and the Discipline of English Literature in the Straits Settlements and Malaya 1895-1907* (Greensboro: ELT Press, 2000), 49-68, Phillip Darby, *The Fiction of Imperialism: Reading between International Relations and Postcolonialism* (London and Washington: Cassell, 1998), 66-73. On the latter, see Ronald Hyam, "Empire and Sexual Opportunity," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 14, no. 2 (1986).

[17] Don Noah and George Fidas, "The Global Infectious Disease Threat and Its Implications for the United States," United States Department of State and National Security Council, National Intelligence Council, http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/nie99-17d.htm

[18] Ibid.

practices, with the authors explicitly linking "changes in human behaviour" including "living styles and sexual practices" as contributing to the threat disease now posed to American hegemony and national security.[19]

This linkage of HIV, sexuality and national image in external imaginings of Thailand – whether it emerges in university classrooms, in deliberations about strategic doctrine, or in transnational health policy - can be read as intrinsically colonial in nature. It is about presenting Thailand as a space in need of Western medical technologies, and one requiring containment and control lest its sexual practices and disease epidemics spread beyond its borders. In this respect, Nicholas King has argued that much current international health policy – especially about HIV/AIDS – is marked by ideologies similar to those that informed the politics and practise of colonial medicine during the 19th century colonial expansion of Europe.[20] King develops on earlier work by Warwick Anderson on colonial tropical medicine, and seeks to explore its applicability for a world marked by globalizing processes such as the spread of information and commodities between even the most remote of locales.[21] Anderson's work explores how colonial medical science operated in support of projects of colonial dispossession and produced discourses of disease in support of particular political ends.[22] Colonial medicine, he argues, worked to characterise Southeast Asia as both a space of disease and degeneracy - "no place for a white man" - but simultaneously, due to medical science's ability to ameliorate these negative characteristics, as "just the place for white dominion over man and nature."[23] In doing so, colonial medicine in Southeast Asia worked alongside colonial ideologies such as the hierarchy of races and geographically informed notions of non-Western social and cultural inferiority. More importantly, it served to enable colonialism's more obvious political goals: the ordering and control of space, the acquisition of territory, the forging of trade links and the imposition of European rule.[24]

Building on these foundations, King identifies parallels between colonial medicine and

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Nicholas B. King, "Security, Disease, Commerce: Ideologies of Postcolonial Global Health," *Social Studies of Science* 32, no. 5/6 (2002): 782-83.

[21] Ibid.: 783.

[22] Warwick Anderson, "Where Is the Postcolonial History of Medicine?," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 72, no. 3 (1998). For other scholars working in this area see, for instance: Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 222, David Arnold, ed., *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[23] Warwick Anderson, "Disease, Race, and Empire," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 70, no. 1 (1996): 63. See also: Warwick Anderson, ""Where Every Prospect Pleases and Only Man Is Vile": Laboratory Medicine as Colonial Discourse," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 3 (1992).

[24] Anderson, "Disease, Race, and Empire," 63.

what he terms an "emerging diseases worldview" in today's metropolitan centres: a way of engaging with the international realm based around the identification and management of patterns of disease that might threaten Western interests in the areas of "national security, international development and global health."[25] One of the key factors in this worldview is the realisation on the part of European and American policymakers and political elites that they are "no longer insulated from the diseases that they assumed had been relegated to the developing world."[26] Western governmental reports of the 1990s reflect this realisation. And as we have already seen, it is very often aspects of everyday life – "[h]uman behaviours including sexual activity [and] substance abuse"[27] – that emerge as central to narratives created in these documents and the international engagements they recommend. A world view shaped by fears about a global epidemic such as HIV and AIDS, supplemented with colourful (and often inaccurate) meanings derived from globally circulating images of nations and societies, is no longer just about state behaviour, military power or economic transactions. Undoubtedly these are still important. But they are now supplemented by an awareness of the power of the individual and the everyday, of the importance of human behaviour and the ways in which it operates both in ways bounded by the interests and regulation of the state, but also in ways that might run quite contrary to the state's attempts at management and control. The impact of this particular way of looking at global processes can be seen in a 1992 report from the Institute of Medicine at the US National Academy of Science:

> As the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) pandemic surely should have taught us, in the context of infectious diseases, there is nowhere in the world from which we are remote and no one from whom we are disconnected. Consequently, some infectious diseases that now affect people in other parts of the world represent potential threats to the United States because of global interdependence, modern transportation, trade, and changing social and cultural patterns.[28]

The choice of language is telling. There is now "no one" – the personalisation stands out all the more vividly due to its unexpected presence in what is otherwise the disembodied language of international affairs - from whom "we" are disconnected. The personal, more than ever, now appears as the political, and human actions representative of a politics that needs to be corralled by technologies of description, containment and control. This is not about fostering human security.

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[25] King, "Security, Disease, Commerce," 764.
[26] Ibid.: 767.
[27] Ibid.: 768.
[28] Joshua Lederberg, Robert T. Shope, and Stanley C. Oaks, Jr., *Emerging Infections: Microbial Threats to Health in the United States* (Washington: National Academy Press, 1992), v.

Rather, it is about securing the state against individual human actions.[29] The fear is that sex, and its concomitant diseases, might well be catching and could drag not just developing countries, but also Western powers, down with it. This is a new Orientalist discourse that paints societies such as Thailand along classically colonial lines of understanding – as spaces requiring management and intervention. It is a discourse supplemented by the sorts of sexualised misconceptions identified by Del Casino and others; a discourse that suggests that sexuality operates differently in Thailand and the "Far East" and that sexual permissiveness and sexual disease might be equally contagious. There is the fear that the Western traveller – epitomised in the figure of the white sex tourist - might "go native" and return bearing both pathological as well as cultural contagion: armed with the potential to destroy. A new Southeast Asian "domino effect" looms threateningly in the Western psyche: this time about the inexorable spread of infectious diseases and contagious sexualities. Like earlier fears about communist ideology, this is seen as operating initially within the Southeast Asian region. But even more than the "communist threat", in a world of accelerated transport linkages and flows of people, HIV/AIDS and the sexual practices by which it spread are now perceived as carrying the potential to sweep all before them and threaten the West itself.[30] According to this story, Thailand – and other developing nations – are spaces needing urgent international intervention: both for their sake, and for "ours".

At the same time that these understandings of Thailand travel around the globe, another, quite different approach to understanding Thailand's encounter with HIV and AIDS circulates. And if our first story can be broadly labelled as colonial, emanating from the realms of international diplomacy and transnational medical policy, this second tale emerges from the domain of cultural studies and critical theory. For many years now, Thailand, many of its regional South East Asian neighbours as well as large parts of Africa have been happy hunting grounds for theorists and activists keen to write accounts of Western hegemony. These narratives have been sharply critical of the sorts of colonial ideologies that I have already identified. Non-Western societies and their experiences of HIV/AIDS have been treated as archives from which narratives of Western

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[29] While beyond the scope of this chapter, there is significant overlap here with the Western response to terrorism, most especially that pursued under the banner of the "War on Terror".

[30] Similar characterisations of Asian societies (China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Vietnam) were common in the West during the 2003 outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

dominance, disinterest or damage can be extracted and repackaged for an audience of postcolonial activists, scholars and theorists. Something of the flavour of this is captured in Nancy Rose Hunt's report of her attendance at an international AIDS conference held at a resort hotel in Senegal in 1996. Hunt writes of individuals she "began to call "postcolonial missionaries" in the Anglophone AIDS industry in Africa, fervent "experts" itinerating in foreign lands among people who inspire pity and seem to need new family forms, subjectivities, and bodily practices."[31] The sorts of attitudes that Hunt encountered in Senegal should not be taken as representative of the politics or approach of all those postcolonial critics who work to uncover bias or control in international HIV/AIDS policy and preventative measures. When it comes to exploring the ways that HIV and AIDS (and the transnational responses they inspire) function as sources of knowledge about the international, techniques and insights drawn from postcolonial studies can assume a signal importance. But it is perhaps important to keep some of Hunt's scepticism with us as we read these accounts; to question why and for what audiences such critical analyses are written; to ask what contribution they might make to the alleviation of suffering or the search for concrete solutions.

Critical and postcolonial interventions into the knowledge politics of HIV/AIDS have censured what they present as the colonial provenance of much of the contemporary management of the disease in the non-West. Perhaps the most widely read academic work on the transnational politics of HIV and AIDS from these perspectives comes from the American scholar and activist, Cindy Patton. Patton believes that Asian nations have been made subject to a series of gendered and sexualised stereotypes. She writes that for global health policy makers – mostly located in Western metropolitan centres – "Asian AIDS" only became an issue of international importance when it began to effect tourists who had consumed commercial sex while on Asian holidays. The global policies on HIV prevention that resulted from this awareness have had the effect of casting Thailand and other Asian countries as passive, feminised and incapable of resisting infection from outside the borders of the nation. Adopting both gendered and sexual metaphors, Patton writes: "In the context of global AIDS policy, Asia is hyperfeminized: passive ('AIDS arrives late'), but also, like the popular Anglo trope of the prematurely developed pubescent girl, alluring beyond her own comprehension, *attracting* fatal attention."[32] In Patton's reading, much of the blame for the

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[31] Nancy Rose Hunt, "Condoms, Confessors, Conferences: Among AIDS Derivatives in Africa," *The Journal of the International Institute, University of Michigan* 2006, no. 24 January (1997), http://www.umich.edu/~iinet/journal/vol4no3/hunt.html.

[32] Cindy Patton, "Critical Bodies," in *Trajectories: Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, ed. Kuan-Hsing Chen (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 316. Original emphasis.

rapid growth in HIV infections in Asia from the early 1990s onwards should be laid at the door of international consumption of particular national images of Asian nations as feminised, sexually available and pathetically incapable of resisting either sexual conquest or disease infection.[33]

Such studies provide us with some useful ways of conceptualising the Thai epidemic and the global response to it. Perhaps most importantly for our current purposes, they provide us with insights into the ways that knowledge about HIV and AIDS – including knowledge about the sexual practises by which it is most commonly transmitted – feed into the definition and regulation of international spaces and politics. Paula Treichler has argued that, "with its genuine potential for global devastation, the AIDS epidemic is simultaneously an epidemic of a transmissible lethal disease and an epidemic of meanings or signification."[34] She draws an explicit linkage between the transnational and global impact of HIV/AIDS and the creation of new forms of transnational relations. Treichler's work encourages us to explore the crossovers of meaning between forms of knowledge about the disease, its transmission and its prevention and control (on the one hand) and those forms of knowledge that shape relations between peoples, societies and nations or even structure the milieux in which those relations take place (on the other).

Identifying and exploring these connections has been the primary goal of many postcolonial studies of HIV and AIDS. Much of this work has taken the form of criticisms of Western medical technologies, most especially in terms of the political messages and transnational power relations they are seen to structure and enable once they are transplanted into non-Western societies. Treichler's work, for instance, explores the connections and the disjunctures between scientific and medical accounts of HIV and those forms of knowledge that emerge from the diverse ways in which the disease, and its forms of transmission, are infused with cultural, social, political and national meaning. [35] She builds on the groundbreaking social commentary of Susan Sontag, who in her 1989 essay "AIDS and its Metaphors" wrote of how AIDS operates as a politically potent locus of meaning. AIDS, Sontag argued, has "a dual metaphoric genealogy" that informs

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[33] Ibid. It is worth noting that while Patton draws heavily on Thai examples, she presents them not as a case studies in their own right but as indicative of what she terms "Asian AIDS". In Patton's accounts, the everyday and specific experience of HIV and AIDS in Thailand (and of the West's interaction and complicity in that experience) become merely part of a wider analysis that paints broad-brushstroke pictures of a Southeast Asian epidemic. It is also worth noting that Patton's work on "Asian AIDS" is often presented a counterpoint to her far more extensive – and more widely read – work on "African AIDS". On this latter point see: Cindy Patton, "From Nation to Family: Containing "African AIDS"," in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, ed. Andrew Parker, et al. (New York and London: Routledge, 1992).

[34] Paula A. Treichler, *How to Have Theory in an Epidemic: Cultural Chronicles of AIDS* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 11.

[35] Ibid.

how it functions within social and political discourse.[36] It is at once described in military terms – an invasion, an agent that comes from outside to attack cells, bodies, borders and communities – and in moral terms of pollution, laxity, punishment and guilt. These metaphoric associations are redolent with notions of guilt, shame and fear. For Sontag, these meanings function together limit the patient's ability to resist; taken on a national scale they can also fundamentally restrict the range of possibilities for national and individual management of the epidemic.[37] It is not difficult to see the politics identified here: the scientific, the rational and the modern approach to disease stands accused ensuring undesirable bodies and non-Western societies are perpetually cast in the role of afflicted supplicants at the altar of hegemonic political power and medical science.

HIV has often been characterised in terms of the disease being external to the nation and linked to the movement across national borders of individuals with aberrant, and therefore dangerous, sexualities. Cindy Patton has termed these characterisations "official travelogues", and argues that the understandings of HIV and AIDS and of transnational processes that they shape are common to both the West and to the developing world.[38] In her estimation, national governments have been quick to cast certain types of bodies and identities – usually those that are identified as major risk groups within the Western experience of HIV and AIDS - as responsible for bringing HIV inside the borders of the nation. These official travelogues in turn serve the purpose of insulating conventional social understandings and practices of sexuality from change, and cast governmental non-action in response to health threats in the most positive light. They allow government and society to misrepresent HIV/AIDS as external to the body of the nation and only associated with deviant sexualities and politics; usually exemplified by the figure of the sexually promiscuous Western (or Western influenced) gay man.[39] Simultaneously, they permit governments and societies to abrogate their culpability for those aspects of daily life or governmental policy that might have contributed to the spread of HIV within and across the nation's borders. [40]

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[36] Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor - AIDS and Its Metaphors* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 102.

[37] Ibid., 130-45.

[38] The existence and politics of this phenomenon in the North American experience of HIV/AIDS is satirised beautifully in John Greyson's 1993 film, *Zero Patience*: John Greyson, "Zero Patience: A Musical About AIDS," (Canada: Strand Releasing, 1993). For more on this, see: Robert L. Cagle, "'Tell the Story of My Life…': The Making of Meaning, 'Monsters,' and Music in John Greyson's *Zero Patience*," *The Velvet Light Trap* 35 (1995), Richard Dellamora, "John Greyson's *Zero Patience* in the Canadian Firmament: Cultural Practice/Cultural Studies," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 64, no. 44 (1995), Christopher Gittings, ""Zero Patience", Genre, Difference, and Ideology: Singing and Dancing Queer Nation," *Cinema Journal* 41, no. 1 (2001), Roger Hallas, "The Genealogical Pedagogy of John Greyson's *Zero Patience*," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 12, no. 1 (2003).

[39] Cindy Patton, "Migratory Vices," in *Queer Diasporas*, ed. Cindy Patton and Benigno Sanchez-Eppler (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 17-18. See also: Jon Binnie, *The Globalization of Sexuality* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage, 2004), 107-08.

[40] Patton, "Migratory Vices," 17.

The Thai case broadly accords with this schema. A report released by the Thai Red Cross and the Institute of Population Studies at Chulalongkorn University identifies a Thai gay man who returned to Thailand in 1984 after graduate study in the United States as the "first" case of AIDS reported in the country.[41] Early public health promotions designed to limit the spread of HIV in Thailand focused almost exclusively on Thai gay men, foreign tourists and foreign residents, despite the potential for a much larger epidemic in the local heterosexually active population (given the large heterosexual commercial sex industry in Thailand and the widespread consumption of commercial sex by heterosexual Thai men). The miscasting of HIV as a disease that primarily affected gay men continued in the mainstream Thai language press with a scare campaign that called for the government to suppress homosexuality and criminalise homosexual acts.[42] Both government and society seemed reluctant to deal with what would become, by the late 1980s and early 1990s, an overwhelmingly heterosexually transmitted epidemic. In mainstream understandings, the disease continued to be regarded as located predominantly in foreign bodies and spread through foreign sexualities.[43] Within the early medical and scientific accounts, and in popular understandings, the apparently low incidence of HIV infections in Asia was explained in terms of Asian populations being somehow immune from the threat of infection, "safe behind a cultural - if not genetic - Maginot line."[44] For example, in Malaysia, socio-cultural taboos and sexual conservatism joined forces with political attempts to distance the nation from Western cultural influence[45] in characterising HIV as an issue of predominantly Western concern. The leading Kuala Lumpur broadsheet, the *New Straits Times,* argued in a recent editorial that "[a]nti-AIDS efforts in Malaysia have long been blunted by their association with promiscuity and Western decadence." The newspaper's editors draw a clear link between religious-cultural moral codes and politicised rhetoric about sexuality and transnational politics, both of which, they assert, have hampered anti-AIDS efforts in Malaysian society.[46]

Yet this siting of HIV "in the body of an Other",[47] and popular belief in the apparent

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[41] Jackson, *Dear Uncle Go*, 282. Jackson cites: Sittitrai et al., "Thai Sexual Behaviour and Risk of HIV Infection."

[42] Jackson, *Dear Uncle Go*, 283. See also: Peter A. Jackson, "Thai Buddhist Accounts of Male Homosexuality and AIDS in the 1980s," *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 6, no. 3 (1995).

[43] For more examples of such processes see: Cindy Patton, *Globalizing AIDS* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 73.

[44] Bruce Weniger and Tim Brown, "The March of AIDS through Asia," *New England Journal of Medicine* 335, no. 5 (1996): 343. Weniger and Brown's comments are directed to a critique of the following report: P. Piot et al., "AIDS: An International Perspective," *Science* 239 (1988).

[45] See Chapter Five.

[46] "Editorial: Sex, Lies and AIDS Denial," *New Straits Times,* 19 August 2006.

[47] Patton, "Migratory Vices," 18.

resistance of Asian bodies to infection, was to be challenged as the world watched the Thai experience of HIV unfold.[48] As Beyrer explains, "Thailand was the country that first exploded the myth of Asian invulnerability to AIDS."[49] By the early 1990s, homosexually active men in Thailand formed such a small percentage of the total number of HIV/AIDS cases that they were routinely ignored in reports of the developing Thai epidemic.[50] Ideas of Asia, and Thailand specifically, as spaces immune from HIV were largely discredited. The burden of explaining the disease to government and society, and providing populations with the tools to avoid infection, had been shifted onto the disciplines of public health and epidemiological investigation. In many ways, the eagerness on the part of successive Thai governments to improve local health standards by the importation of technologies of Western medical science had ensured that much of the infrastructure – both intellectual and practical – was already in place to allow this to occur. Bruce Weniger and Tim Brown believe that "improved disease-control training and infrastructure [in Thailand] produced exemplary systems of epidemiologic surveillance to record the arrival and dissemination of HIV".[51] Other scholars have written of how the "fastidious collection of data that occurs at all levels of the [Thai] government"[52] worked to reveal the ways in which the epidemic was spreading domestically in ways that ran counter to the official and grassroots understandings then prevalent. These new accounts of HIV described "waves" of infection metaphorically sweeping across Thailand, still predominantly affecting certain groups but now with the alarming possibility of being spread into the Thai population at large. Injecting drug users were identified as the first major population group affected. From the late 1980s onward, epidemiological studies identified "successive waves of HIV transmission to female prostitutes, then to their non-IVDU [intravenous drug user] male clients, and then into the non-prostitute wives and girlfriends of these latter men in the general population."[53]

We are faced, then, with two different, yet overlapping, accounts of the epidemic. One of these is a story of HIV in specifically Thai spaces and of how mainstream publics in those spaces could (or indeed, might already) be insulated from the effects of disease; an assertion of spatial, cultural and even racial distinctiveness and of the protection of socially and nationalistically

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[48] D. Tarantola et al., "Governments of Asia and the Pacific Responding to the HIV/AIDS Pandemic," *AIDS* 8 (Supplement 2) (1994).

[49] Beyrer, *War in the Blood*, 18.

[50] Jackson, *Dear Uncle Go*, 284.

[51] Weniger and Brown, "The March of AIDS through Asia," 343.

[52] Chris Lyttleton, *Endangered Relations: Negotiating Sex and AIDS in Thailand* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2000), 69.

[53] Bruce Weniger et al., "The Epidemiology of HIV Infection and AIDS in Thailand," *AIDS* 5 (Supplement 2) (1991): S71. See also: Jackson, *Dear Uncle Go*, 284-86, Sittitrai et al., "Thai Sexual Behaviour and Risk of HIV Infection."

legitimized groups. The other, more recent tale, is one of decultured and largely indiscriminate transmission of disease into and between risk groups, nations and communities; a narrative where identity, class, race or nation is no guarantee of safety and where HIV moves almost inexorably across boundaries. Each of these has its intellectual antecedents, the former in the annals of colonial tropical medicine, the latter in the more contemporary sourcebooks of epidemiological science. Cindy Patton describes these two categories in the following terms:

> Tropical medicine grows out of and supports the idea that the First World body is the proper gauge of health: the Third World is the location of disease, even while its occupants are not the subjects of tropical medicine. Tropical medicine, then, *points* to an existing map and a hierarchy of bodies. Epidemiology, on the other hand is performative… The story's hero is no longer the body fighting disease, but epidemiology, the "disease detective," which alone has the power to visualize and disrupt the "natural history" of germs' vectorial movement.[54]

Despite their apparent contradictions, Patton believes these two modes of thinking act together to provide resources that are exploited by governments, health agencies and grassroots communities in support of varying medical and political outcomes.[55] In her reading, much of the knowledge about HIV and AIDS that has been circulated globally (by institutions such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization, development agencies and flows of medical and scientific knowledge) has served to protect and promote Euro-American economic and strategic interests and to privilege Western styles of thought. Indeed, the split between tropical and epidemiological accounts helps this occur. The tropical construction of disease in particular spaces reinforces tropes of Third World societies as wretched and underdeveloped, in dire need of Western rescue and guidance. Simultaneously, the epidemiological scrutiny of movement, behaviour and infectivity provides justification for the restriction of travel across state boundaries and reinforces messages about the need for strong national governments and economies, secure within protected borders.[56] For Patton, tropical medicine and epidemiology function as "competing colonialisms."[57]

This identification of colonial meanings in the global response to HIV and AIDS has not merely been a concern of social commentators and political theorists. It has also helped create certain *political* movements in the non-Western world that might broadly be grouped under the head of postcolonial resistance. This is visible in the connections between sexuality, morality and

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[54] Patton, "Migratory Vices," 20-21. Original emphasis.
[55] Patton, *Globalizing AIDS*, 34-50.
[56] Ibid. See also Treichler, *How to Have Theory in an Epidemic*, 103.
[57] Patton, "Migratory Vices," 20.

nationalist rhetoric that we identified in the Malaysian response to HIV/AIDS prevention as well as the characterisation of HIV/AIDS as a foreign threat in the Thai popular press. But such thinking reaches its apotheosis in the South African case. It is useful to explore just how far these lines of thinking have been pursued, in order to evaluate why and to what extent Thai materials might differ. The current President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, has controversially criticised what he appears to regard as a colonialist mentality underlying the Western response to HIV in Africa. He presents this as rooted in Western notions of white superiority and false characterisations of Africa as a land of sexual excess and immorality. These beliefs were placed on the public record in 2001, when, in an address to students at the University of Fort Harare, Mbeki stated that the West, was "[c]onvinced that we are but natural-born, promiscuous carriers of germs…they proclaim that our continent is doomed to an inevitable mortal end because of our unconquerable devotion to the sin of lust."[58]

Many commentators have linked these views to unresolved tensions over South Africa's apartheid and colonial histories.[59] Mbeki's arguments are thus explained in terms of their helping to construct a narrative of South African exceptionalism; helping to distance African nationalisms, politics and societies from their Western counterparts.[60] This inversion of dominant Western paradigms of racial and sexual superiority in order to critique the West operates in ways very similar to those we explored in our earlier examination of discourses of sodomy in Malaysia. Megan Vaughan identifies the skilful ways in which African leaders like Mbeki have linked the spread of HIV and AIDS to a perceived sexual –especially homosexual – degeneracy in the West, in an attempt to present Africa as "a space of social stability and morality, in which sexuality is still ordered by a set of traditional norms."[61] She explains how Mbeki's rhetoric functions as a symbolic rejection of earlier colonial medical characterisations of African sexuality as debauched, diseased and uncontrolled.[62] In the South African case, though, the intersection of colonial and

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[58] B. Streek and D. Forrest, "Mbeki in Bizarre AIDS Outburst," *Mail and Guardian*, 26 October 2001. See also: Helen Schneider and Didier Fassin, "Denial and Defiance: A Socio-Political Analysis of AIDS in South Africa," *AIDS* 16 (Supplement 4) (2002).

[59] For a powerfully argued analysis of the connections between contemporary and colonial approaches to medicine and disease in South Africa see: Megan Vaughan, *Curing Their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness* (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity Press, 1991). See also: Mandisa Mbali, "Mbeki's Denialism and the Ghosts of Apartheid and Colonialism for Post-Apartheid AIDS Policy-Making" (paper presented at the Public Health Journal Club Seminar, University of Natal, Durban, 3 May 2002).

[60] The concept of South African exceptionalism is from Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 27. See also: Adam Sitze, "Denialism," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 4 (2004): 770-71.

[61] Vaughan, *Curing Their Ills*, 206.

[62] Ibid., 129.

contemporary forms of knowledge structure a series of politicised ideas about HIV, its treatment and its connections to the international realm. Adam Sitze summarises these arguments as follows:

> HIV is not the only cause of the many immune deficiencies weakening the South African body politic; poverty also causes the acquisition of immune deficiencies; the science grounding HIV's existence and treatment is not only questionable but racist; ARVs [antiretroviral pharmaceuticals used in the treatment of HIV infection] can neither prevent nor treat the acquisition of poverty-based immune deficiencies; ARVs are linked to the interests of multinational capital; ARVs are not even a cure for HIV and are toxic besides.[63]

The accuracy of these assertions is in one sense – that of nationalist politics and political rhetoric – largely irrelevant. In the postcolony, accounts of Western of dominance, greed and exploitation play well to domestic electorates, regional political bodies and certain elements of transnational opinion. And like most conspiracy theories, attempts at debunking can be easily dismissed by accusations of treasonous behaviour, colonial mindset, brainwashed ignorance or self-interest. In this respect, it is of less importance that President Mbeki seems to have – at least publicly, and following concerns from within his own government – withdrawn from the more aggressive presentation of such views. Rather it is that facts about the transmission, pathology and social impact of a disease agent such as HIV can be regarded as being of such secondary importance in comparison to the political, ideological or theoretical burdens that the disease can be called upon to bear.[64] But in another sense, the very nature of HIV/AIDS calls out for action and for practical solutions. As Paula Treichler argues, "[o]f course, AIDS is a real disease syndrome, damaging and killing real human beings."[65] And while the rhetorical flourishes of AIDS denialism might well strengthen their promoters' grasp on political power or define their position within certain postcolonial political debates (both national and transnational), bringing about concrete changes to assist people living with HIV and AIDS will almost invariably be undertaken on different terrain and by reference to different knowledges. Mbali writes that

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[63] Sitze, "Denialism," 770. Sitze constructs this list from documents such as Peter Mokaba, *Castro Hlongwane, Caravans, Cats, Geese, Foot and Mouth Statistics: HIV/AIDS and the Struggle for the Humanisation of the African* (Unpublished, 2002), Richard Chirimuuta and Rosalind Chirimuuta, *AIDS, Africa and Racism* (London: Free Association Books, 1989). The document *Castro Hlongwane* was circulated to the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress in March 2002. There have even been rumours that this document was in fact written by President Mbeki himself (see: Mbali, "Mbeki's Denialism", fn4.)

[64] See generally: Samantha Power, "The AIDS Rebel: Letter from South Africa," *The New Yorker*, May 19 2003.. Power describes Mbeki's championing (on nationalistic grounds) a South African treatment for HIV infection, Virodene. Mbeki's enthusiasm for the drug was linked to his belief that it would allow South Africa "to bypass the Western pharmaceutical industry." The drug was eventually found to be based on an industrial solvent and to cause severe liver damage in those taking it.

[65] Treichler, *How to Have Theory in an Epidemic*, 11.

> The fact is, though, for the most part overwhelming consensus has shifted in the 'AIDS world' of doctors, medical researchers, NGOs, and most governments internationally, to a more human rights based response to AIDS....This has meant that a technical, scientific non-moralistic approach has prevailed of treating people with HIV and preventing babies, through medication, from getting HIV, and has been yoked with this rights-based discourse.[66]

Mbali's critique, while directed to the failures of Mbeki's approach to HIV/AIDS prevention in South Africa is also of relevance to the sorts of critical analyses of the transnational politics of HIV that we have already explored. While in many ways these are motivated by different politics than Mbeki's, they too function in terms of painting the West as responsible – to a greater or lesser extent – for the ills of the developing and postcolonial worlds. These are both provocative and imaginative. They offer us new was of seeing and thinking about the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and encourage us to be attentive to the inequalities of power, of resources, of education and of international standing that structure different experiences of the epidemic around the world. But it is what remains *unsaid* that is critical. Like Mbeki's rhetoric, such accounts tend to remain embedded within the domain of the discursive, offering perpetual critique but very few concrete solutions. How does the theoretical manoeuvre of identifying Western complicity and calling for greater sensitivity and local agency function when the West occupies not merely a dominant political position, but – through a near monopoly on medical-scientific technology and research - the keys to health and life for citizens living with HIV and AIDS in the postcolony? "Because of this," argues Treichler, "it is tempting - perhaps in some instances imperative - to view science and medicine as providing a discourse about AIDS closer to its "reality" than what we can provide ourselves."[67] This certainly shifts the terms on which HIV/AIDS is defined and managed away from denialist conspiracy and postcolonial rhetoric. In doing so, though, it accords primacy to Western modes of conceptualising and responding to disease. If it is (at least in some cases) imperative to utilise Western medical knowledge, the question now becomes about how different knowledges about HIV can communicate and adapt to one another; of how Western science functions in its encounter with non-Western societies and cultures and what political meanings are created or reinforced in that encounter.

The earlier sections of this chapter canvassed two common, internationally circulating,

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[66] Mbali, "Mbeki's Denialism", 22-23.
[67] Treichler, *How to Have Theory in an Epidemic*, 11.

understandings of HIV and AIDS in Thailand and the developing world. The first of these presents HIV as a problem for the West, to be brought under Western influence and control through the exercise of military-economic power and medical-scientific rationality. The second highlights the colonial mentalities and practises that supposedly underpin those international processes that seek to explain and control HIV's impact and management in non-Western spaces. But despite their widespread acceptance in varying settings around the globe, there are problems with applying either of these accounts to the Thai situation. The facts (as far we know them) disrupt such easy categorisation. Thailand is not an unwilling *or* uncritical consumer of Western scientific or medical technologies and its management of HIV/AIDS has been directed primarily towards protecting domestic populations and national economic concerns rather than the promotion of Western interests. Similarly, accounts of Western perfidy and postcolonial resistance require more nuance if they are to be applied to the Thai case. For instance, they will have to pay attention to the implications of Thailand's common positioning as a global *success* story of HIV/AIDS prevention. The Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Thailand has described the country's response to the epidemic as "a story of impressive achievements" and praised the country for its willingness to adopt a scientific approach to managing HIV infections and for its "courageous and visionary top-level leadership".[68]

> Public health agencies, government ministries, the military, non-governmental organizations, communities and the media all joined together in the campaign to confront the growing epidemic. Most striking of all was the pragmatism that guided Thailand's response. This allowed for an open dialogue about safe sex and condom promotion and a no-nonsense approach to preventing HIV transmission among sex workers and their clients. [69]

This sort of language, highlighting pragmatic rationalism, engagement with local sexual cultures, and the promotion of medical treatment and public health interventions directed to behaviour modification demonstrates the shortfallings of conventional attempts to pigeonhole the Thai response to HIV/AIDS, or characterise it in terms derived from other postcolonial societies' encounter with the epidemic. Awareness of this should lead us to view the connections between transnational processes, sexuality and disease in ways quite different from the simplistic characterisations that have tended to inform global debate to date. Thailand, both as a unit of

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[68] J.K. Robert England, "Preface," in *Thailand's Response to HIV/AIDS: Progress and Challenges*, by United Nations Development Programme (Bangkok: United Nations Development Programme, 2004), iii.
[69] Ibid.

socio-cultural analysis and as a widely publicised case study of successful national policies of HIV prevention, calls out to be treated not as idealised exemplar but as a study in difference; with sensitivity to its distinctive national politics, cultural ethos and its unique experience of managing European colonial influence.

In my introductory comments to this section of the thesis, I introduced Thongchai Winichakul's work on how the modern science of cartography was adopted by nineteenth century Siamese political elites in order to define the boundaries of the Siamese nation, in an attempt to insulate the country from the threat of colonial occupation.[70] Adoption of Western knowledge about the definition and nature of territorial sovereignty was perceived as both desirable and unavoidable if Siam was to retain any form of autonomy and influence within the new global political realities being inscribed by colonialism. The construction of what Thongchai terms the "geo-body" of the Siamese (and later Thai) nation is a useful example of the sorts of issues that approaching the study of international affairs from a culturally-informed postcolonial perspective can help uncover.[71] Most importantly, it highlights the need for a politics of positionality. Work on the cultures and societies of Thailand – in both historical and contemporary contexts – needs to be informed by Thai perspectives, or at least by a far greater expertise in Thailand and its people than is the case in most current globally-circulating accounts. Siam was never formally colonised by a European power and its contemporary configurations of national identity are shaped by significant pride at this fact. Yet the eagerness of nineteenth century Siamese rulers to adopt and benefit from the modern political form of the nation-state (even in the absence of its direct imposition by an occupying power), demonstrates the hegemonic reach and transformative potential of Western knowledge constructions in shaping (and continuing to shape) the ways that national and international spaces are governed, navigated and understood. We must therefore remain aware that a range of different theoretical frameworks may be required to explain the varied aspects of the Thai management of HIV. As John Nguyet Erni argues in his reading of Thailand's engagement with the HIV epidemic:

> the story of HIV/AIDS in Asia is realistically a fragmented narrative, punctuated by orientalist, anti-orientalist, and self-orientalizing tendencies, and is therefore necessarily jumbled, shuffled, and agitated by these political and cultural thrusts. More than a 'war of positions' made up of contrasting

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[70] See "Sexual Compasses", above. Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994).
[71] Ibid.

and shifting voices than a monolinguistic and unified narrative, and less unidirectional than circular, this story realistically resists stable and totalizing definitions.[72]

Our search for clues about the functioning of knowledge about the international and about the relationship between metropolitan and non-Western societies must therefore be sensitive to the complex range of factors that inform both everyday Thai life and broader governmental and social responses to HIV and AIDS. Some phenomena will appear to resonate with postcolonial modes of analysis; others (given the enthusiastic embrace of structures and technologies of Western modernity by Siamese and Thai elites) may well bear more resemblance to colonial modes of thinking and control. In both cases, it is the things that have remained unspoken in the existing externally-derived accounts of Thai sexualities and Thai responses to HIV and AIDS that may prove the most productive sites of enquiry. These will include Thailand's unique cultural outlook, historical relationship to European colonialism, constructions of national identity and social and political governance. There is a strong need to explore how HIV prevention efforts in Thailand have worked *with* and *within* cultural and national specificities in bringing technologies of Western medical science to bear on the Thai experience of HIV.

The nineteenth century saw political elites in the Siam engaged in overt practises of nation building. Many of these track through into very contemporary Thai responses to the challenges of HIV and AIDS. In light of my earlier chapters, many of the issues here will appear familiar: nationalism, militarism, and the creation of reproductive and patriotic gendered and sexual identities. These aspects of national identity were regarded as vitally important, given the economic and military dominance of Europe in the Southeast Asian region and the influx to Siam of massive numbers of Chinese migrants.[73] Under the reformist monarchs Chulalongkorn (reigned 1868-1910) and Vajiravudh (reigned 1910-1925), the control of knowledge became central to the project of modernising Siam and building a public sense of affiliation with a modern national identity.[74]

Western medical science played a central role in this process of constructing a modern Siam. European medical practitioners were present at the Siamese court at Ayutthaya as early as 1672, when the Dutch East India Company provided a Dutch doctor as personal physician to the

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[72] John Nguyet Erni, "Of Desire, the *Farang* and Textual Excursions: Assembling 'Asian AIDS'," *Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (1997).

[73] Scot Barmé, "Proto-Feminist Discourses in Early Twentieth-Century Siam," in *Genders and Sexualities in Modern Thailand*, ed. Peter A. Jackson and Nerida M. Cook (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1999), Thamora V. Fishel, "Romances of the Sixth Reign: Gender, Sexuality and Siamese Nationalism," in *Genders and Sexualities in Modern Thailand*, ed. Peter A. Jackson and Nerida M. Cook (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1999).

[74] Fishel, "Romances of the Sixth Reign," 165-66.

king.[75] The interest that successive Siamese monarchs showed in Western science and modernity paralleled their growing concern for Siam to be accorded respect and recognition in a world dominated by Western military and economic power. Science, technology and medicine became central to their attempts to modernise Siam and ensure its ongoing independence.[76] Chulalongkorn, for instance, played an important role in modernising public health delivery and administration in the late nineteenth century and his Oxford-educated son Vajiravudh built on this work during his own reign, overseeing an expansion of hospitals, universities and medical schools.[77] Another of Chulalongkorn's sons, Prince Mahidol of Songkhla (father of the current Thai monarch, King Bhumipol Adulyadej), became the central figure in early twentieth century Thai public health. Mahidol took degrees in medicine and public health from Harvard University, and helped expand opportunities both for the education of doctors and nurses and for the pursuit of medical research in Thailand by negotiating funds from the royal family and from the American Rockefeller Foundation. To this day, the prince is known as the "father" of modern medicine and public health in Thailand.[78] For the royal court and for national administrators, Western medicine came to be regarded as one of the building blocks of the modern and progressive Thai nation, able to be bent to local circumstances and objectives. On the face of it, such understandings have a very different quality to those contemporary narratives that impugn Western medicine for its complicity in processes of colonial control, both in the nineteenth century and in the current day. Accordingly, one of our tasks must be to explore the contemporary resonances of this ambivalent relationship between Thai governments, artefacts of Western modernity and everyday Thai life worlds.

The world in which Thailand has been forced to confront HIV and AIDS is, in many respects, not dissimilar to the world in which it had previously confronted European colonial dominance over the Southeast Asian region. In the 1980s and 1990s when HIV first emerged as a major challenge for the nation, Thailand was engaged in the task of negotiating a place within the accelerated forms and processes of global capitalism and managing the domestic impact of the

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[75] Peter Boomgaard, "Dutch Medicine in Asia, 1600-1900," in *Warm Climates and Western Medicine: The Emergence of Tropical Medicine, 1500-1900*, ed. David Arnold (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Editions Rodopi B.V., 1996), 45-46.

[76] See generally, Karine Delaye, "Colonial Co-Operation and Regional Construction: Anglo-French Medical and Sanitary Relations in South-East Asia," *Asia Europe Journal* 2 (2004), Ian Hodges, "Western Science in Siam: A Tale of Two Kings," *Osiris* 13 (2nd series) (1998).

[77] S. Charulukananan and T. Sueblinvong, "King Chulalongkorn: Biography and His Activities in Medicine and Public Health," *Journal of the Medical Association of Thailand* 86, no. 2 (Supplement) (2003), Walter Francis Vella, *Chaiyo! King Vajiravudh and the Development of Thai Nationalism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1978).

[78] Robert L. Anders and Wipada Kunaviktikul, "Nursing in Thailand," *Nursing and Health Sciences* 1, no. 4 (1999), Bangkok Post, "In Commemoration of HRH Mahidol of Songkhla," Bangkok Post, http://www.bangkokpost.net/kingmahidol/.

global spread of Western political ideologies, cultural forms and economic interests.[79] As in the earlier case, this took the form of a simultaneous assertion of cultural and national particularity, but also a selective usage of tools provided by Western modernity. To give just one example, Thailand assiduously courted Western capital, tourist flows, and export markets in order to bolster its claim to being part of a distinctively Asian – and the rhetoric of the times, miraculous – economic boom. HIV emerged as a major threat both to internal social and political stability, but also to Thailand's transnational relations, economic growth and international standing. Read with an awareness of Thailand's historical development, the responses to these threats appear remarkably familiar. Indeed, the relationship of Thai national managers to these technologies of Western science today could be regarded as being about the continuance of very *colonial* modes of elite political and social control. Firstly, Thai governments marshalled Western medicine (in this case, medical and pharmacological science and techniques of disease surveillance) to ensure national survival and protect ongoing economic prosperity. Secondly, they sought to control and direct the domestic response to HIV and its management in ways that ensured ongoing social and political stability. And it is in the varying Thai responses to the changes wrought by HIV and AIDS – not just at elite but also at grassroots levels - that we can begin to see how ideas about the international are circulated, recast and utilised.

For mainstream international theory, taking such an approach might appear novel, or even counterintuitive. In their work on the HIV epidemic in Africa, Lanegran and Hyden have identified a failure on the part of international theorists to engage with the issues raised by HIV. In 1993, they wrote: "Here is a major global issue with potential ramifications as great as any war, yet hardly any political scientist shows scientific interest in it!"[80] Arguably, not much has changed since that time. Where HIV and AIDS have been examined within disciplinary international relations, this has not been about the identification of sources of meaning that structure international politics or spaces. Rather, the limited examination of these issue within the discipline has turned on the management of those threats HIV poses to extant disciplinary structures such as international political economy, state security, the stability of the international "order" or the functioning of the

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[79] The implications of this for the Asian region are explored more fully in: L. H. M. Ling, "Cultural Chauvinism and the Liberal International Order: "West versus Rest" In Asia's Financial Crisis," in *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender and Class*, ed. Geeta Chowdhry and Sheila Nair (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

[80] Kim Lanegran and Goran Hyden, "Mapping the Politics of AIDS: Illustrations from East Africa," *Population and Environment* 14, no. 3 (1993): 246-47. See also: Vinh-Kim Nguyen and Katherine Stovel, "The Social Science of HIV/AIDS: A Critical Review and Priorities for Action," (New York: Working Group on HIV/AIDS, Social Science Research Council, 2004), 39-41.

global-local dialectic.[81]

A postcolonially informed and critically self-aware approach to rethinking international theory has much to offer in trying to think this limited analytical scope. For instance, the presentation of particular local spaces and communities – both national and communal - as zones of safety, stability and fixity, and the propagation of concerns about their contamination at the hands of minutely catalogued domestic and foreign "risk groups", are common (if not to say constitutive) postcolonial phenomena. We have already explored many of the outcomes of these processes: the characterizations of sodomy as a threat to the social fabric of the nation; the need to control reproductive heterosexuality in order to protect racial and cultural distinctiveness; the turn to national, gendered or sexual identities as sources of personal security in the face of political uncertainty. For our current task, it is significant that the management of HIV and AIDS in Thailand has drawn on a diverse blend of knowledge forms: tropical and epidemiological understandings of disease; issues of transnational relations and globalizing processes; local understandings of gender, sexuality, disease and suffering. Speaking specifically of the Thai case, Chris Lyttleton writes that attempts to restrict the spread of HIV have worked to shape a set of meanings about the epidemic that are globally informed but also enmeshed within specifically Thai "economies of sexuality, power and modernity."[82] The use of information about the disease, he writes, acts to "describe the threat of infection, it delimits sub-groups of the population at relatively higher risk, and importantly in the growth of knowledge about HIV, it determines the language of metaphor with which the virus and the disease will be imagined in the population's conceptions of health and behaviour."[83] The knowledge that is created in the Thai response to HIV and AIDS, and the political uses to which it is put, has often been about the reinforcement of elite control over gendered and sexual behaviour, institutional politics and international processes. But it has also operated in ways that open up the international realm to alternative, even dissenting, conceptualisations and engagements. Three very different areas – each of which touches on the

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[81] For examples of this see: Solomon R. Benatar, "The HIV/AIDS Pandemic: A Sign of Instability in a Complex Global System," *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 27, no. 2 (2002), Kelly Lee and Anthony Zwi, "A Global Political Economy Approach to AIDS: Ideology, Interests and Implication," *New Political Economy* 1 (1996), Dennis Altman, "HIV and Security," *International Relations* 17, no. 4 (2003), Catherine Boone and Jake Batsell, "Politics and AIDS in Africa: Research Agendas in Political Science and International Relations," *Africa Today* 48, no. 2 (2001), Lincoln Chen and Vasant Narasimhan, "Human Security and Global Health," *Journal of Human Development* 4, no. 2 (2003), Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, "New Threats to Human Security in the Era of Globalization," *Journal of Human Development* 4, no. 2 (2003), Peter Piot et al., "A Global Response to AIDS: Lessons Learned, New Threats," *Science* 304 (2004).
[82] Lyttleton, *Endangered Relations*, 33. See also: Verapol Chandeying, "Sexual Health Promotion in Thailand," *Sexual Health* 2, no. 3 (2005).
[83] Lyttleton, *Endangered Relations*, 68.

knowledge politics of both HIV/AIDS and of international processes – will help us explore these issues. These are the deployment of concepts about borders and the state in the management of disease threats, the role of national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the ways in which HIV has shaped certain modes of accessing international spaces.

The two studies of HIV with which I opened this chapter are both narratives of boundaries under threat; stories where ideas about disease and sexuality have become intertwined with concepts of territorial security, international standing and national identity. When we examine the accounts that describe and help create these connections, it is critical to note their tendency to position HIV infection as external to national boundaries. Strong similarities can be detected between these characterisations of HIV, and the metaphoric meanings ascribed to sodomy that we explored in Chapter Five. That is to say, like sodomy, HIV has been perennially presented as being from somewhere else: it is never domestic in origin. The virus is cast as a perpetual outsider; a foreign organism that originates from beyond, and threatens the physical and cultural boundaries of the nation-state. For the West, the home of HIV is the Third World. Western knowledge about the disease is often coloured by colonial and contemporary tropes of Asian or African sexual excess, promiscuity, degeneracy and disease. Concurrently, though, in non-Western states such as Thailand, HIV has (in some quarters at least) been regarded as the disease of the modern and the Western, spread through modern, globalizing practises and flows: the penetration of sex tourism, homosexual identities, and Western capital, bodies and lifestyles across the borders of the postcolonial state. In these opposed accounts, HIV is both everywhere, and nowhere, its rhetorical deployment and the construction of knowledge around it central to a politicised reinforcement of self-conception through the demonisation and labelling of others as sexually deviant, diseased and dangerous. Much of the global and national management of HIV has been linked to these practises of shoring up state borders. It is worth exploring in some depth how this operates; how the medical description and management of HIV and AIDS can work to create new knowledges about international domains but also to reinforce existing knowledges derived from state practise, or theoretical description.

The director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Peter Piot, has spoken frankly of how, in order to gain support from political leaders around the globe,

he has had to position global HIV policy in terms of institutional political concerns of national interest, political stability and economic development. Piot is reported as saying: "I asked myself what political leaders really care about…The truth is, it's not health. It's economics and security. Health is what they talk about if there's money left at the end of the day. I realized I needed to lift our cause out of that arena."[84] While Piot's comments are significant in highlighting the connections between global health policy and the reinforcement of issues of sovereignty and security, there is perhaps not such a great distance between health management and issues of national security or economic development as his comments would have us believe. For instance, the two dominant intellectual constructs that describe international politics and the transmission of HIV have startling similarities. The academic discipline of international relations and the medical science of epidemiology are both Western intellectual constructs, concerned with the attempt to theorise, model and explain processes so complex and so broad in scope that they appear to require generalization and simplification if they are to be comprehended or influenced at all. Epidemiology's concern is with tracking and predicting the incidence and distribution of diseases and other health factors, while the social "science" of disciplinary international relations attempts to model the behaviour of an international system of nation-states, global flows and transnational institutions. More importantly, both of these disciplines deal with the functioning and maintenance of borders; with operating normatively in an attempt to limit or prevent incursions into national and bodily spaces, over territorial and metaphorical national boundaries and across the corporeal frontiers of cells, membranes and bodies. Because of this, many of the meanings they create operate in mutually reinforcing fashions. Ananya Mukherjea has argued that

> [t]he practice of epidemiology is, in significant part, an exercise in drawing and maintaining political and territorial boundaries…Even as epidemiological institutions strive to eradicate infectious disease and minimise its adverse effects, they resort to strategies to stop disease spatially at some line or within some demarcation…That containment is usually deployed along the lines of state borders, regardless of what is known about the disease's history of movement across them.[85]

We can see here see how attempts to manage the HIV epidemic scientifically and rationally might reinforce the influence of categories derived from mainstream theories of international relations. They might also operate to entrench certain socially approved regimes of gender and

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[84] Geoffrey Cowley, "The Life of a Virus Hunter: A Long Crusade," *Newsweek*, 15 May 2006.
[85] Ananya Mukherjea, "Stopping AIDS: Global Patents, Local Effects and the Management of National Borders," *Radical Society* 30, no. 2 (2003): 11.

sexuality by offering protection (from infection and political critique) to members of those gendered and sexual identities or social groupings from whom state managers derive power and political legitimacy. Exploring these issues in the Thai case involves identifying the ways in which the colonial and neo-colonial ideologies of medicine and health we have already identified might feed into very contemporary Thai responses to the challenges of HIV and AIDS. It also requires us to think about new forms of power relations that might operate in the global management of the HIV and AIDS epidemic and their domestic implications for Thai government and society.

There have been a number of studies exploring the impact on politics and society of national efforts to combat HIV/AIDS. Sarah Brophy has argued that the casting of the virus as an externally derived threat to the polis in both governmental rhetoric and non-governmental promotion of HIV preventative measures has a number of political consequences. One of her key concerns is the impact of military metaphors – seen most obviously in the language of waging "war" on AIDS. She argues that the policies that emerge under the aegis of such metaphors encourage and perpetuate deferral to authority figures and established socio–political structures (both global and domestic). They impose consensus, stigmatise people living with HIV and AIDS as domestic threats to state stability and survival, and prioritise rationalist rhetoric (at the expense of emotional accounts of loss, grief or mourning) in order to maintain a sense of being on a continual war footing .[86] Reading the connections between these issues in Thailand, Chris Lyttleton has argued that the deployment of Western medical scientific technologies of epidemiological surveillance and treating HIV with antiretroviral pharmaceuticals has, in some respects, operated *against* social change in the areas of Thai gender relations or sexual practises. For example, by proposing categories for the identification, treatment and (in some cases) the social rejection and containment of those who are HIV positive, Western medical science insulates many aspects of Thai male sexuality – especially the widespread use of patronage of the commercial sex industry – from challenge or critique. If the HIV positive sex worker can be identified and contained, then structures of heterosexual prostitution and male sexual dominance go unchallenged, and are even in some cases reinforced as men search for – and recruit – "untainted" prostitutes and sexual partners

[86] Sarah Brophy, "Book Reviews: Paula Treichler. *How to Have Theory in an Epidemic: Cultural Chronicles of AIDS.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press 1999. 477 pp. Paperback, $23.95," *Literature and Medicine* 21, no. 2 (2002): 310-11. For a reading of these issues in the Thai context see: Chayan Viddhanaphuti, "Thailand's Experience - Country Report," in *Studies and Reports (Special Series on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care: A Cultural Approach)* (Chiang Mai: Cultural Policies for Development Unit, UNESCO, 1999), 7-8.

for unprotected sex.[87] Thus, the entry of technologies of public health intervention has worked (in some ways at least) to support domestically Thai systems of gender, sex and sexuality, systems that often work in ways that are almost completely opposed to the goals of HIV prevention through behaviour modification and social transformation.

Analyses such as these can help demonstrate the differences between the goals of international health policy and its practical outcomes when implemented within particular national, cultural and social spaces. But they also highlight the contradictions that subsist between those aspects of international politics that critical theory tells us are created or fortified by international health practise – sovereignty, borders, territorial integrity - and the realities of how boundaries, and the meanings that surround them, are impacted by the everyday negotiations of HIV in culture and society. Here, Thai examples encourage us to think less in terms of theoretical absolutes and more in terms of how reading the connections between sexuality and HIV/AIDS might allow us to see how everyday understandings of borders and national identity operate in ways that sometimes bear out and sometimes gainsay theoretical models. Work by Amorntip Amarapibal and Chris Lyttleton on the knowledge politics of sexuality and HIV that are constructed with reference to the Thai/Lao border is a good demonstration of how this operates. They acknowledge that the border dynamics of HIV/AIDS in Thailand often work in the ways suggested by most critical theoretical accounts, pointing to the epidemiological description of "high risk mobile populations with attendant high levels of HIV infection"[88] that move across the Thai border. These include Burmese fishermen, brothel workers at crossing points between Cambodia and Thailand and truck drivers working along major road haulage routes.[89] However, in terms of knowledge about the international, their work suggests that HIV – and the new sexual practises it has helped to shape – is contributing to new ways in which the Thai/Lao border is understood, in both official and everyday understandings. Amorntip and Lyttleton examine a pair of "sister" cities – Mukdahan and Savannakhet – on opposite sides of the Mekong River that comprises the border between Thailand and Laos. They describe a meeting held between government and grassroots organisations from both Thailand and Laos to address the vulnerabilities to HIV transmissions created in this border

[87] Lyttleton, *Endangered Relations*, 62. Lyttleton draws extensively on: C. Waldby, S. Kippax, and J. Crawford, "Cordon Sanitaire - "Clean" And "Unclean" Women in the AIDS Discourse of Young Men (Unpublished Paper)," (Sydney: AIDS Research Unit Macquarie University).

[88] Chris Lyttleton and Amorntip Amarapibal, "Sister Cities and Easy Passage: HIV, Mobility and Economies of Desire in a Thai/Lao Border Zone," *Social Science & Medicine* 54 (2002): 505.

[89] The work that has been done on trucking routes out of Northwest Laos is instructive in this regard: Chris Lyttleton et al., *Watermelons, Bars and Trucks: Dangerous Intersections in Northwest Lao PDR - An Ethnographic Study of Social Change and Health Vulnerability Along the Road through Muang Sing and Muang Long* (Vientiane: Lao Institute for Cultural Research, 2004).

zone. The meeting highlighted that traditionally, the river border was crossed frequently and often unofficially; border policing was usually directed towards protecting what was perceived as a shared culture between ethnically similar Thais and Laotians. But, in Amorntip and Lyttleton's reading of this meeting, knowledge about the HIV epidemic was working to reshape the way the national border was understood and the politics associated with its crossing. In some ways, this operated predictably. From the Lao side, the very visibility and public nature of the response to HIV in Thailand contributed to calls for greater border definition and policing. From Thai perspectives, the *lack* of comprehensive testing and treatment programmes in Laos led to questions from Thai participants about whether Laos represented "the "dangerous Other" who could swamp them on this side of the river and should the border therefore become a reinvigorated symbol of control?"[90] As the authors of the study argue, in the meeting room, "Thai and Lao were in chorus with the desire to contain by adequate knowledge…by knowing rather than suspecting who is infected…Border policing was the instrumental safeguard, containment the goal."[91]

Work such as this allows us to see how knowledge about the sexual transmission of HIV/AIDS, interventions into sexual behaviour proceeding under the banner of public health, and traditional tenets of international relations such as territorial sovereignty and national interest are mutually informing and reinforcing. But this is only part of the story. Knowledge about HIV and its modes of transmission has also encouraged a very different series of understandings about the Mekong River border between Thailand and Laos. These understandings are most obvious on the Thai side of the border, given the higher profile of education and public health promotions about HIV/AIDS prevention in that country. For many Thai men, widespread publicity about HIV/AIDS and attempts to prevent its transmission have made sexual activity within Thailand ever-more subject to social and political scrutiny and regulation. Amorntip and Lyttleton explain how this has encouraged the emergence of new forms of sexual practice and identity, and new ways of conceiving of the border between the two countries.

> The appeal of exotic sexual commodification is amplified in other ways by the conjunction of AIDS and high modernity…The process of the displacement and ongoing commodification of sexuality has all the building blocks in place in the Mukdahan/Savannakhet nexus.…As certain forms of sexual practice have lost their marketability within Thailand, a culture exceedingly familiar with sexual commoditization, other forms take their place. Savannakhet due to its positioning so close to the

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[90] Lyttleton and Amarapibal, "Sister Cities and Easy Passage," 516.
[91] Ibid.

urban mileu of Mukdahan now operates in part as a service industry providing these new forms of sexuality.[92]

While these new sexual economies might rely on and reinvigorate concepts of national difference, the new ways of conceptualising border crossing which they have engendered have much more to do with the desirability of crossing national boundaries for sexual contact than the epidemiological characterisations of borders needing fortification against such sexual peregrinations. A new set of knowledge about the cross-border relations between Thailand and Laos is emerging through everyday practices; of movement, of sexual encounters and of the negotiations of the social and political changes wrought in Thai society by HIV and AIDS. For instance, new sexual identities are emerging to describe those able to master these new realities and the knowledges they create. Thai men in the region now refer to those with a *"sing song fang* identity – the lion of both sides – a euphemism for a Thai man who is able to command respect and (sexual) attention"* in both Thailand and Laos.[93] To cross over into the Laotian city is, for these men, to leave behind the social and sexual constraints that HIV awareness and prevention have made so common within Thai sexual economies. There is a curious liminality to this border crossing behaviour. On the one hand, Laotian women are exoticised for their difference, and for their emplacement in spaces that are free from Thai structures of social-sexual regulation. Yet they are also culturally similar, in ways that allow the negotiation of sex on the basis (however misplaced) of shared trust. As Amorntip and Lyttleton write "Lao women are the Other in terms of erotic appeal; they are non-Other in terms of prohibitive HIV threat, they can be trusted, they are kin, they are part of the same community."[94] The boundary meanings created by HIV/AIDS awareness in this scenario are not strictly about binary oppositions or sharply defined national spaces. They are fluid, contingent and sometimes contradictory, above all emerging from the interaction between the knowledges derived from international health policy, the politics of national HIV prevention efforts and the impact, reception and circulation of such meanings in the domain of the everyday. And it is precisely this interaction that we explore as we turn to the roles non-governmental organisations - both international and domestically Thai - have played in structuring knowledge about HIV and AIDS in Thai everyday life.

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[92] Ibid.: 514.
[93] Ibid.: 513.
[94] Ibid.: 515.

For many years, now, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – described by Geraldine Heng as "that ubiquitous institution of the Third World"[95] – have functioned as brokers between the everyday and the international. Their very nature – embedded in local spaces but explicitly engaging national and international politics and knowledges – ensures that NGOs have been responsible for bringing different, often internationally circulating, politics and knowledges into contact with local communities. They are an interface between external modernities and local cultures; sometimes in alliance with the state, sometimes in ways that bypass or transcend state-based and national structures of control and regulation. Most importantly to our quest for new sources of knowledge about the international, they have played key roles in rendering that external modernity in terms that can be comprehended, debated or effect social change within local communities.

An iconic figure in this reconciliation of Western technologies of medical surveillance, population development and HIV/AIDS education and prevention with specifically Thai cultures and circumstances is Mechai Viravaidya, the chair and founder of the non-governmental and non-profit organisation, the Population and Community Development Association (PDA).[96] Mechai's work in the NGO sector and his own life history catches something of the unique relationship between Thai and Western forms of knowledge. Mechai's paternal grandfather was a prominent figure in Thai medical circles in the early 20th century; the surname Viravaidya was bestowed by King Vajiravudh and literally means "brave doctor". Mechai's father undertook his medical training in Edinburgh where he met and married a Scottish classmate. While the couple returned to live and practice medicine in Thailand, they ensured that their son Mechai was also educated abroad, first at Australia's elite Geelong Grammar School (where he was a keen cricketer and Australian Rules footballer), and later at the University of Melbourne, where he read economics.[97]

Mechai's biographer, Thomas D'Agnes, has presented this experience of growing up in the spaces between different worldviews as key to Mechai's ability to bring Western technologies of development economics, population planning and poverty alleviation to bear on Thai geographies and societies. D'Agnes paints a picture of the young Mechai being shaped by the dual influences of British and Thai cultures, of Buddhist and Christian faiths and by those privileges bestowed by

[95] Geraldine Heng, "'A Great Way to Fly': Nationalism, the State and the Varieties of Third-World Feminism," in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, ed. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 30.
[96] See: http://www.pda.or.th/
[97] D'Agnes, *From Condoms to Cabbages*.

parental wealth and personal education as well as by his mother's inculcation in him of a strong sense of duty towards those less fortunate.[98] It is this ability to negotiate – and translate between – different cultures and worldviews that perhaps explains Mechai's achievements in promoting the sorts of changes in Thai culture, society and sexual practices that have made Thailand the global poster child for successful policies of HIV prevention in developing societies. Mechai's early grassroots work in family planning and population control involved grassroots campaigns designed to bring about change in everyday sexual cultures. These campaigns – on issues such as contraception, condom use, and sexual behaviour - blended elements of popular culture, street theatre, micro-credit initiatives, economic incentives, consciousness raising and public education techniques with Buddhist scriptural interpretations and appeals to citizens' desires to be regarded as modern and progressive. So successful have they been that condoms are now known colloquially in Thailand as "Mechais."[99] And it was this experience of intervening into issues of sexuality and everyday life that was to provide the groundwork on which Thailand's HIV prevention policies, in both governmental and NGO sectors, would build, once HIV emerged as a major issue in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

There is a curious historical resonance to the ways in which Mechai Viravaidya helped bring Western technologies of public health and epidemiological surveillance to bear on the HIV problem in Thailand. Mechai was one of the earliest social and political leaders to take seriously the threat of HIV infection and take active steps to prevent it. Significantly, his approach was to look initially outside Thailand: to Western scientific and medical technologies and to Western attempts to control HIV's spread through education and behaviour modification programmes. Like Prince Mahidol (Thailand's "father" of public health), Mechai used time at America's Harvard University, where he was a Visiting Scholar at the Harvard Institute for International Development in 1988 and 1989, to access as much up-to-date information on the causes, transmission and management of the HIV epidemic as he could. And like the Prince, Mechai used time in America to enlist the support of the Rockefeller Foundation, returning to Thailand having secured Rockefeller funding for anti-AIDS videos to be screened on Thai television. While much of his work in HIV prevention proceeded under the aegis of the PDA and other NGOs, in the early years of the epidemic Mechai was given official responsibilities for combating both the sexualisation of Thailand's external

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[98] Ibid., 53-120.
[99] Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, "Biography of Mechai Viravaidya."

representations and its rapidly growing HIV problem. Following a military coup in 1991, he was given government appointments that saw him take responsibility for both Thailand's tourism authority and for its HIV prevention efforts.

Following Mechai's designation as a government minister, Thailand made remarkable progress towards limiting the spread of HIV/AID. Indeed it is possible to argue that Thailand's success in combating rural poverty, family planning issues and HIV/AIDS has derived at least partly from Mechai's ability to connect work in the non-governmental sector with the opportunities offered by his governmental appointments – both as a member of various statutory boards, and as a government minister. During his government tenure, Mechai used bodies such as the PDA to help implement government policies and programmes including the HIV antibody testing of military conscripts, a "100% condom use" policy in brothels (whereby refusal to use a condom leads to refusal of the sexual service and no refund for the consumer), measures to ensure brothel owners provide regular sexual health testing for sex industry workers and widespread HIV education campaigns in local communities and in the mass media. As tourism minister, he made a concerted effort change external, tourism-focussed representations of Thailand, attempting to downplay the depiction of sex industries and the promotion of sex tourism. Mechai continued his advocacy, education and HIV prevention efforts in the NGO sector following the resumption of democratic governance in 1992. Measures of the success of his campaigns – in both government and in the private sector - include a dramatic fall in the numbers of new HIV infections reported annually and a huge rise in the usage of condoms in the commercial sex industry.[100]

Mechai Viravaidya and the PDA exemplify a uniquely Thai reaction to HIV and AIDS. They exemplify how many of Thailand's impressive achievements in HIV prevention derive from action taken by non-governmental organisations often in collaboration with structures of international knowledge, domestic political elites and grassroots communities. They also provide us with insights into the ways in which the intersections of HIV, medicine and sexuality help structure particular sets of meanings about the nature and functioning of international spaces. Perhaps the most interesting of these has to do with the relationship between everyday Thai society and Western medical science. One of the key lessons of Thailand's experience of HIV has to do with

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[100] The number of new HIV infections reported each year has fallen from a high of 143,000 in 1991 (when Mechai began his term as government minister responsible for HIV prevention) to 19,000 in 2003.[100] Similarly, condom use has become far more common. In 1991, male conscripts in the Thai military reported condom usage in 62% of commercial sexual encounters; by 1995 those rates had reached 92%. See: Kenrad E. Nelson et al., "Changes in Sexual Behavior and a Decline in HIV Infection among Young Men in Thailand," *New England Journal of Medicine* 335, no. 5 (1996).

the terms on which medical technologies of HIV surveillance and treatment have entered non-Western national or social spaces. Chris Beyrer believes that Thailand's long experience with Western medicine, and the overt association between medical science, public health and the Thai royal family, acted to create public spaces for the discussion both of the sexual transmission of HIV/AIDS and of medical surveillance, prevention and treatment options.[101] Ideas of modernity, nationalism and popular support for the monarchy all fed into the ways in which medical intervention came to be regarded. In this light, the medicalisation of the epidemic may well have help make discussion of the sexually transmitted nature of HIV infection more acceptable.

NGOs have played key roles in rendering this nationally- and internationally-imbued knowledge in terms that make sense, and help achieve desired changes in behaviour, attitude and knowledge within local, often village-based, Thai communities. This has involved taking into account existing knowledges derived from Buddhist scriptures and teachings, from everyday life, from traditional understandings of disease and healing, and even from pre-existing notions of Thai nationalism, domestic governance, and foreign relations. Lyttleton writes:

> While top-down education programs perform the valuable role of alerting the Thai populace of the present and potential threat HIV poses, history has shown that it is unreasonable to expect direct translation of this information into desired behaviour change. In any context of programmatic information transfer laden with regulatory intent, resistance to imposed ideologies is inevitable. Local participation in community-based projects is crucial to complement national initiatives both to personalize their relevance and to temper the inevitable although unintended counterproductive reactions.[102]

In this presentation, to be effective the NGO must be able to translate between local, national and international vocabularies and registers of meaning. Speaking precisely of this process - of using external content to drive changes in local Thai societies - the UNDP has argued that "the real value rests less in the specific interventions (the content of the response) and more in how strategies and programmes were implemented (the form)."[103] Here we see a major international organisation explicitly acknowledging that the success of Thailand's HIV prevention programmes derives not so much from its utilisation of Western medical technologies (which are, after all,

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[101] Public Broadcasting Service, "Interview: Chris Beyrer," http://www.pbs.org/wgbh//pages/frontline/aids/interviews/beyrer.html.

[102] Chris Lyttleton, "Health and Development: Knowledge Systems and Local Practice in Rural Thailand," *Health Transition Review* 6 (1996): 46. See also: Paul Cohen, "The Politics of Primary Health Care in Thailand, with Special Reference to Nongovernment Organizations," in *The Political Economy of Primary Health Care in Southeast Asia*, ed. Paul Cohen and John Purcal (Canberra: Australian Development Studies Network, 1988), 165.

[103] United Nations Development Programme, *Thailand's Response to HIV/AIDS: Progress and Challenges*, Thematic MDG Report (Bangkok: United Nations Development Programme, 2004), 29.

globally circulating and, to a greater or lesser degree available for adoption) but in the specifics of how these are rendered locally comprehensible and efficacious. This has long been presented as the goal of much NGO, private sector and development work; expressed in the language of knowledge transfer, intermediate technologies and respect for local traditions. But in many cases around the world, the tendency has been for these ambitions to be honoured more in the realm of theory than in that of praxis. Without wanting to downplay issues of inequality (between nations, knowledge forms and societies), the Thai case stands as a rare example of a more-or-less successful interaction between globally circulating knowledges and locally specific circumstances. Let us explore some of the reasons behind this seemingly anomalous occurrence – and their implications for international theory.

Perhaps the most obvious of these is that there are now very few parts of the world from which the international realm is at all distant or foreign. Societies the world over have become more adept at managing the increasingly obvious changes and challenges wrought by accelerated global flows and the conduct of international politics, in often surprising modes.[104] We have already tracked this in much of the previous work of the thesis. In the Thai case, awareness of this fact should lead us away from reliance on those modes of understanding that paint HIV as necessarily the disease of the urban and modern. In many ways the discourses of HIV and its treatment have worked in tandem with increased economic development and globalization to bring the urban, the modern and the transnational into dialogue with rural societies, and to make the pre-existing presence of transnational flows within rural societies more visible.[105]

For instance, the NGO sector's work in Thai HIV prevention helps us see the extent to which ideas of national identity and sovereignty have penetrated into even the most remote or seemingly unsophisticated Thai communities. This was apparent in the negotiations of the meanings attached to the Thai/Lao border as we explored earlier. Elsewhere, when addressing a grassroots rally in 1989, Mechai Viravaidya called upon specifically Thai histories of national military success and international relations as an exhortation to take seriously the challenges HIV posed to the Thai nation. He said: "We must unite in this war against AIDS…We lost the old capital (Ayutthaya) to Burma twice in our history and were able to take it back, so we can win the

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[104] This is captured beautifully in Peter Metcalf's account of the adoption of images of the American wrestler Hulk Hogan as a source of self-empowerment and anti-national politics in the longhouses of Borneo: Peter Metcalf, "Hulk Hogan in the Rainforest," in *Global Goes Local: Popular Culture in Asia*, ed. Tim Craig and Richard King (Victoria: University of British Columbia Press, 2001).

[105] Lyttleton, *Endangered Relations*, 193.

fight against AIDS."[106] While this choice of language may be open to criticism in its construction of nationalist imagery and deferral to structures of authority, it is significant that Mechai regarded such appeals to patriotic sentiment and international standing as the most relevant means by which to inspire behaviour modification. Uniquely Thai knowledges about nationalism, diplomatic history and international politics are here understood to be so much a part of everyday life as to be relevant ways of situating debate over the contemporary challenges of HIV. It also demonstrates the fact that, for many in Thailand, the state (most obviously as epitomised by the royal house) is rarely understood in oppositional or confrontational terms. This can be seen in Mechai's ambiguous positioning as both NGO activist, government figure and parliamentarian. It is also visible in the ways in which local Thai communities access HIV prevention and treatment services. As Vincent Del Casino writes in his study of NGO operations in the north of Thailand, for people living with HIV and AIDS, "it is often difficult, and perhaps unimportant, to distinguish between ongkaan rat (government organizations) and ongkaan ekachon (private organizations)."[107]

This insinuation of aspects of modernity into local and rural communities can also be seen in the development of new forms of sexual identity and behaviour. For example, research has pointed to how the penetration of television – an archetypal medium of modernity – has encouraged rural Thai youths to emulate what they perceive as modern and Western-styled sexual behaviour, leading to increased sexual activity and consequently higher risks of contracting HIV.[108] Phenomena like this indicate the sorts of issues with which the NGO response to HIV has had to grapple. Because HIV is so intrinsically interwoven with the everyday realities of sex, NGOs have been forced to engage deeply with everyday life as it is lived in the various parts of Thailand where they operate. Put simply, to deal with HIV is fundamentally to deal with sex. As a consequence, Thai communities have been forced to confront their own sexual practices, especially as those practices have been made visible by processes of epidemiological monitoring and medical description.[109] More importantly, they have had to confront the challenges wrought by HIV prevention programmes that have sought to alter or intervene in everyday sexual practices and identities.

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[106] Mechai Viravaidya speaking at a public AIDS awareness rally in Bangkok, 1989 as quoted in D'Agnes, *From Condoms to Cabbages*, 326.

[107] Vincent J. Del Casino, Jr., "Enabling Geographies? Non-Governmental Organizations and the Empowerment of People Living with HIV and AIDS," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (2001): 20.

[108] Lyttleton, *Endangered Relations*, 105.

[109] Beyrer, *War in the Blood*, 34-35. For a reading of similar issues in the Indian case, see: Anil Ananthaswamy, "Culture Shock," *New Scientist*, 25 January 2003, 42.

There is a body of received wisdom within postcolonial theory that provides neat, and often insightful, ways of analysing such issues of sexuality in the developing world.[110] These readings present European colonialism as the central factor shaping Asian and African sexual traditions and mores, and read post-independence attempts to differentiate local sexual moralities from Western and colonial models as inspired by politics of mimicry, hybridity and nationalist resistance.[111] I do not wish to denigrate the important work done under these rubrics. I have trodden similar paths myself in the preceding chapters. But how well do such approaches serve the scholar of Thailand? The country's unique history of managing colonial and postcolonial Western dominance, and its seemingly enthusiastic embrace of aspects of Western modernity – most notably technologies of medical science, research and social transformation – would appear to call out for different treatment.

It is significant, for instance, that the epidemiological identification of dangerous, even controversial sexual behaviours in the Thai response to HIV has not elicited the sorts of political controversy or social backlash that we have seen in other examples around the developing world. To state the obvious, Thailand is not a South Africa or a Malaysia. While there may have been attempts to paint HIV as the disease of the external, or the Western, the social and political responses to sexuality and HIV in Thailand have certainly not been marked by the sorts of pro-nationalist and denialist rhetoric that we have seen from leaders like Thabo Mbeki or Mahathir Mohamed. In this case at least, the unique qualities of Thai society, culture and nationalism contribute to (or at least do not work to disable) the success of prevention programmes based around sexual education or the identification and amelioration of risky sexual practises. The focus can thus remain far more on issues of sexuality as it is lived in everyday life rather than as it is constructed through nationalist discourse and political rhetoric. Unlike its regional neighbours, Thailand has not had to struggle to define and assert national and cultural distinctiveness in the aftermath of European colonial occupation. The country's unique historical relationship with European colonialism and its ongoing management by elites concerned with protecting aspects of national identity and promoting ongoing stability perhaps works to imbue its social and national

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[110] See for example: Martin F. Manalansan, IV., "(Re)Locating the Gay Filipino: Resistance, Postcolonialism and Identity," *Journal of Homosexuality* 26, no. 2/3 (1993), Ann Laura Stoler, "Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Gender, Race and Morality in Colonial Asia," in *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era*, ed. Michaela di Leonardo (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991).
[111] These concepts are of course from: Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

approaches to sexuality – and the knowledges of the international they help inform - with distinctive characteristics. In the Hong Kong case I explored in the previous chapter, it was the *longevity* of European colonialism and the ambiguities of its ending that worked to create a space – which I dubbed the "not-quite state" – in which a great many possibilities existed for sexual self-imagining and agency in manipulating flows of international politics and change. The Thai situation, however, is marked by a simultaneous *absence* of histories of overt European colonialism and the presence of strong forms of elite domestic political control. This means that much of the Thai social and cultural regulation of sexuality does not operate in fashions directly analogous to the processes we explored in our earlier readings of sexuality in Singapore or Malaysia. Aspects of modernity – be they modern sexual identities or behaviours, the medical-scientific apparatus of HIV monitoring, or social/sexual changes such as condom use or empowering sex industry workers – are perhaps more easily and more often invited into the national space by political and social leaders, and may well find a readier public audience once they arrive.

Del Casino's work on Thai citizens' interaction with non-governmental organisations develops this point further. He writes that local communities affected by HIV and AIDS regard NGOs – and their connections to both national and international power structures – as resources that are at once reflective of certain authorised power structures within society, but also open to manipulation; as windows providing access to broader national or international spaces and politics. Del Casino's work explores the ways that NGOs uncover the "tears that exist in the socio-spatial configuration of power, allowing social actors to play these tears for their benefit."[112] He explores one (anonymous) NGO in the north of Thailand, and argues that people living with HIV in Thailand have been able to use the NGO's work to, at least in some respects, benefit from and influence both national and international processes and flows. This is contingent on a range of factors: the state can act to close off such opportunities, and the funding and priorities of NGOs can change. Nonetheless, the presence of the NGO, and the gaps it opens up between the national and the local, and between the everyday and the international, makes it a site where new forms of accessing and understanding international spaces can occur.[113] This is very often about the attempt to access economic or knowledge resources held in other social, national or political spaces. But

112 Del Casino, "Enabling Geographies? ," 2.
113 Sekai Nzenza has explored this issue of local people tactically navigating the programmes and assumptions of Western aid organisations and NGOs in: Sekai Nzenza, "African Grief," in *Postcolonizing the International: Working to Change the Way We Are*, ed. Phillip Darby (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 145-48.

significantly, it can also function with respect to sexuality, and not always in modes suggested by either the prevention of HIV transmission or the imposition of nationally-mandated codes of gendered behaviour. To take just one example, Ara Wilson has written of the ways that participation in NGO activities or regional and international meetings directed to HIV prevention policies allows some Thai same-sex-attracted women (be they civil society activists or women living with HIV/AIDS) to explore their sexual identities and meet other homosexual women from around the region. She presents this as an "alternative geography", that allows these women to adopt, avoid, or recast notions of sexual identity or behaviour that circulate in the global response to HIV and AIDS.[114] Wilson writes that NGOs function as "spaces for practices, relations, and sociality: and some of them have functioned as significant erotic sites…They offer an alternative translocal public arena, often the only occasion for Thai lesbians to meet others from Asia. This is one example of unintended and contingent effects of civil society on sexual possibilities."[115]

Still, if our analysis must acknowledge the power of the individual, and the importance of everyday settings, it must equally pay attention to some of the areas in which influencing international processes or resisting certain forms of transnationally circulating knowledge might prove difficult or impossible. We have already seen the ways in which Western medical science has its alliances both with external loci of power – Western strategic interests, transnational pharmaceutical companies, the industries of AIDS – and with Thai political elites. One way of reading this would be to regard the connection between Thai nationalism, political managerialism and Western medicine as hegemony in the Gramscian sense, the transformation of structures of control and subjection into such a form as to make them appear unremarkable, taken for granted, or even to be positively embraced: rule through political and cultural consensus.[116]

Del Casino explores some of these issues in his analysis of "traditional" and "modern" medicine in the Thai context. He argues that even where specifically Thai herbal treatments for HIV have been promoted by local NGOs, the meanings attached to them are derived from their positioning in debates over the relationship between local knowledge and flows of global change.[117] He explores how traditional practitioners have attempted to imbue traditional processes of Thai

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[114] Ara Wilson, "Intra-Asian Circuits and the Problem of Global Queer," Sexualities, Genders, and Rights in Asia: First International Conference of Asian Queer Studies, http://bangkok2005.anu.edu.au/papers/Wilson.pdf.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Antonio Gramsci, Quintin Hoare, and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971).
[117] Vincent J. Del Casino, Jr., "(Re)Placing Health and Health Care: Mapping the Competing Discourses and Practices of 'Traditional' and 'Modern' Thai Medicine," *Health & Place* 10 (2004): 68-70.

medicine with Western scientific methodologies and practises, encompassing notions of asepsis, packaging and delivery of medicines and the emplacement of Thai medicine in institutions such as the hospital or the clinic. Reading Del Casino's work with an awareness of the difficulty – if not impossibility - of resisting certain Western knowledge forms, such as Western medicine, gives new nuance to his observation that "the 'traditional' (read: Thai medicine) is literally (re)placed in relation to a larger, modernized public health-care system…as a way to deal with the HIV/AIDS crisis."[118]

Western medicine, in readings such as these, is never value-neutral. Obviously, it occupies hegemonic positions in both international and national spaces. But more interestingly, there are very real limits on the extent to which it can be denied or pushed away. Even the most trenchant nationalist rhetoric about the evils of Western medical science or critiques of how pharmaceutical manufacturers ensure profits through the manipulation global patent regimes[119], usually concede the fact that Western medical science can be a source – indeed, it is often the major or only source – of knowledge, products and technologies for alleviating suffering and preventing disease transmission. Readings such as this make us confront the fact that certain technologies of modernity are incapable of ever being provincialised by the postcolony. Here, I follow Dipesh Chakrabarty, who initially called for a "politics of despair"[120] in response to the fact that the West operates as the inescapable referent against which postcolonial politics and histories are measured. Chakrabarty's work on the impossibility of resisting many aspects of colonial modernity is significant makes significant contributions to uncovering how a knowledge source such as medical science might make certain aspects of political and social organisation, and certain understandings of international politics, compulsory within postcolonial society. But more telling are the changes in Chakrabarty's opinion that have seen him shift his view in later work to present the relationship between the postcolony and European thought not so much as inspiring politics of resistance or despair, but as best pursued in an "anti-colonial spirit of gratitude."[121] In these readings, much of the knowledge of sexuality, of health and medicine, and even about international spaces, politics and flows in the postcolonial world is defined externally and is difficult to escape or substantively

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[118] Ibid.: 60.

[119] Mukherjea, "Stopping AIDS."

[120] Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks For "Indian" Pasts?," *Representations* 37 (1992): 23.

[121] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 265.

alter. However, while the politics of these knowledge forms may well be hegemonic, they are not necessarily exclusionary. Very real benefits can flow from the strategic exploitation of these structures of modernity in society; conversely, resisting them could well be either a regressive or damaging course of action, and likely to provoke external mechanisms of discipline and control.

Thailand, more than the examples of South Africa or Malaysia that we have already touched on, might have been better situated than most nations or societies to benefit from this fact. Its unique historical relationship to European colonialism and strong state management based around a technocratic elite whose rule is sanctioned by a revered royal household, has helped facilitate the entry of technologies of governance, medical science or social organisation. And it is in these processes – and the impacts of external knowledges in everyday Thai spaces – that we can most clearly track the development of new knowledges about the international. One way of conceptualising this is to consider how both sexuality and HIV (and very often the two categories in alliance) are both means by which interventions from, or appeals to, international technologies, spaces or politics are legitimised. They help link the everyday to both the national and to the international, working in ways that both push local and national communities to look outside for solutions to problems and which impel external power structures to intervene.

The control of knowledge was central to the colonial project. It continues to define and mark out many of the parameters of the contemporary postcolonial world. Such processes are perhaps most visible in the propagation of the political form of the Westphalian nation-state beyond the borders of Europe. This was achieved not merely through the acquisition of territory by European powers but by the ordering, management and transformation of geographies and populations in accordance with Western doctrines of social order, economic planning, scientific rationalism and political management. Such processes continue to fundamentally define the shape of the postcolonial world, due to their subsequent adoption in what Partha Chatterjee has described as the derivative discourses of postcolonial nationalism and in the struggles for formal independence and practical autonomy on the part of non-Western societies.[122]

Yet as we have seen in this chapter the hegemonic influence of particular Western knowledge forms, whether these be about national definition and governance or the management

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[122] Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (New Delhi: Zed Books, 1985).

of bodies, social-sexual relations and disease, is rarely straightforward or predictable. Thailand emerged as a modern national society both as a result of British colonial activity in the Southeast Asian area, but also through the active involvement of the Siamese court in adopting and bending the Western form of the nation state to its own political ends. Similarly, we have see how Thailand's relationship with Western medical technologies – most obviously in the management of HIV/AIDS - has been marked by a strategic and self-interested embrace of Western knowledge forms and their translation into locally pertinent vocabularies. In each of these cases, ideas of sexuality and of everyday life loom large. Sexual practises help underwrite the nation's future, they shape local cultures, national images, social interactions and gender relations. But they bring with them the potential for contamination: by foreign diseases, ideologies and subjectivities.

Sexuality has always been a major aspect of Thailand's relationship with the outside world. Sexualised and orientalist stereotypes of the country abound. These range from wildly inaccurate 19th century accounts - epitomised by Anna Leonowens' volumes *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* and *The Romance of the Harem* - to contemporary accounts of Thailand as a space of sexual possibility and exotic sensuality.[123] Supplementing these accounts are those narratives strategically promoted (or at least not discouraged) by Thai elites, encompassing national tourist advertising and visions of accepting - and easily accessible - local sexual cultures available to foreign visitors. Sexuality has played a significant role in many of Thailand's programmes of looking outside itself; its attempts to recast what might appear on the surface to be social problems as inducements, or bargaining chips, in broader international negotiations.[124] We saw this in the Thai government's acceptance of early development rhetoric from the World Bank that led it to prioritise tourist economies and promotions - linked especially to ideas of easily available commercial sex services - in the service of national economic growth.[125] And it continues to be visible in Thailand's promotion of its response to HIV and AIDS as exemplifying the nation's progressive politics and rationalist state management. Being part of the international "AIDS industry" – the location for

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[123] Anna Leonowens, *The English Governess at the Siamese Court: Recollections of Six Years in the Royal Palace at Bangkok* (London: Folio Society, 1980), Anna Leonowens, *The Romance of the Harem* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991). These texts' subsequent adaptations into Broadway and Hollywood musical form remain banned in today's Thailand. On *The King and I* and its subsequent remake *Anna and the King* (also banned in Thailand) see: Patrick Jory, "The King and Us: Representations of Monarchy in Thailand and the Case of Anna and the King," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 4, no. 2 (2001).

[124] An interesting parallel to this, on the strategic use of "disorder" in order to attract international attention, aid money or assistance in Africa, is explored in: Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

[125] Leslie Ann Jeffrey, *Sex and Borders: Gender, National Identity and Prostitution Policy in Thailand* (Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 2002), 77-80.

major international medical conferences on HIV/AIDS and a paragon of HIV prevention policy in the developing world – ensures Thailand is kept at the forefront of global attention. Even the negative connotations of a disease such as HIV can be resignified so as to represent national claims to modernity or international prestige

If sexuality acts to push nations and everyday communities into dialogue with external processes, technologies and knowledge, equally it works to pull the external into domestic, everyday spaces. We have tracked how this works in our readings of the sexual transmission and sexualised knowledges that surround HIV/AIDS. It has driven the state-based aid and intervention programmes of Western powers, and brought languages of personal sexual behaviour and movement into the remit of thinking about security or international politics. Combating HIV is the justification for the presence and operations of NGOs in local spaces and concepts of sexuality act to inform many of their politics and programmes. Similarly, the connections between HIV and sex help shape those new meanings that are informing the politics of border crossing in many parts of Thailand. Tracking these ideas in the African context, Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly have argued that HIV transmission is "gruesomely metaphoric of a process of globalization across national borders."[126]

These insights are important. But it is in tracking their influence at the level of the local and the everyday that we can find some of the most significant lessons for this thesis' attempt to read the international from materials on sexuality. William Haver has provocatively suggested that HIV might best be regarded as cosmopolitan in nature: able to move freely across boundaries in ways that transcend cultural, social or national diversity.[127] As sex is a universally human phenomenon, HIV can come to inhabit the most varied and remote of human communities. It thus forces local communities to negotiate and translate between personal, national and global sources. And as Jon Binnie argues, like a good cosmopolitan, HIV is able to deal with difference, either by ignoring it, subverting it, or even annihilating it.[128] The impossibilities of avoiding Western technologies of disease management; the global circulation and imposition of approved "safer sexual" identities, practises and moralities;[129] the alliances between HIV prevention and the state;

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[126] Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly, eds., *Sites of Desire, Economies of Pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 20.
[127] William Haver, *The Body of This Death: Historicity and Sociality in the Time of AIDS* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 7.
[128] Binnie, *The Globalization of Sexuality*, 107-21.
[129] The fact that the HIV prevention mantra of "ABC" (Abstinence, Be Faithful, Use Condoms), common in developing countries and strongly promoted by US governmental agencies and the Vatican, is reflective of a certain sexual politics informed by Judaeo-Christian morality is instructive here: Steven W. Sinding, "Does 'CNN' (Condoms, Needles,

and even the fact that those least successful at managing the tensions between different knowledge forms and sources are those most likely to die as a result of HIV infection, all contribute to HIV's ability to transcend, even erase, difference.

Consequently, the need for critically informed accounts of international processes that more adequately reflect lived realities is more pressing than ever. In recent work, Phillip Darby has sought to encourage scholars of the international to seek out a broader range of sources from which to assemble a more inclusive, progressive and complete palette of concepts from which a picture of the international can be sketched out.[130] Darby points to the colonial experience and the inequities of development and globalization as potential starting points for a new strand of international theory grounded in the insights provided by everyday life and social processes. This approach obviously accords with the arguments I have pursued here. Yet, going further, Darby presents these sorts of analytical interventions as providing not merely a new source of materials from which to theorise the international, but as a potential goad for scholars to engage seriously with the processes by which knowledge about the international is created, transmitted and consumed.

Like most processes of globalization, HIV/AIDS can be read as an example of the increasing permeability of territorial boundaries and national sovereignty but also as a provocation to modern states to reassert and protect their ongoing existence and relevance.[131] As we have already seen, studies of these issues have begun to emerge in the literature of both international relations and political science. Nevertheless, their current form and politics have remained largely wedded to the preservation of existing orders. Consequently, there are benefits to be gained from starting outside existing theory; with a focus not so much on existing structures and grand narratives but on new forms, locations and sources of knowledge about the international. As Darby argues, those ideas that can be uncovered by examining everyday cultural sources, "cannot be read from the canon of Western political theory, much less from the archive of IR [international relations], hobbled as it is by its insistence on the primacy of the state, the privileging of the modern (meaning Western) and a circumscribed understanding of what constitutes the political."[132]

Negotiation) Work Better Than 'ABC' (Abstinence, Being Faithful and Condom Use) in Attacking the AIDS Epidemic?," *International Family Planning Perspectives* 31, no. 1 (2005).

[130] Phillip Darby, "Reconfiguring "The International": Knowledge Machines, Boundaries and Exclusions," *Alternatives* 28 (2003), Phillip Darby, "Pursuing the Political: A Postcolonial Rethinking of Relations International," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 1 (2004).

[131] Dennis Altman, "Globalization, Political Economy, and HIV/AIDS," *Theory and Society* 28 (1999): 562.

[132] Darby, "Pursuing the Political," 31.

The Thai examples I have introduced here help work through the implications of Darby's postcolonial critique of disciplinary international theory. A critical reading of colonially derived knowledge-systems about nationalism, sexuality, the state and disease, and the impact of these on contemporary responses to HIV is the first step in this process. These colonial histories, and a reading of the varying scientific, medical, ideological and cultural narratives of HIV/AIDS, signpost a route towards a potentially fuller and more progressive reading of the sources of international meaning. I signalled this possibility by titling this chapter: "epidemiologies of the international". The title identifies the link between those knowledges we uncover by monitoring sexual behaviour, and how these might relate to global transmissions of knowledge about the international. In a sense, such concerns are central to the thesis' project of "sexing up the international". Each of my previous chapters has addressed the power of globally circulating technologies of modernity and international politics, and the possibilities for individuals and communities to tactically navigate international spaces and create new knowledge about the international. This chapter has made these concerns central to its investigations, tracking how structures of international politics, institutions of Western modernity, and issues of sexuality work together to enact closures but also to provide certain opportunities, both in the knowledge politics of international theory and in the everyday understandings of the international consumed and created by postcolonial citizens.

So much of this chapter's discussion of sexuality and HIV and AIDS has turned on the issue of travel: of ideas, knowledges and people, within and between national and international spaces. For many, HIV has functioned as a path out into the international, offering access to the sorts of spaces, sexual practices and economic opportunities that we have tracked in our readings of NGOs and border politics. In other instances, processes of disease surveillance have highlighted patterns of movement and sexual interaction, along transport routes, across national boundaries and between urban and rural spaces. But for many others, their experience of HIV is not one of movement, but rather one of fixity – in particular spaces, in particular geographies, in particular classes, and in particular understandings of gender and sexuality. And it is the ambiguities that this chapter has highlighted: between movement and fixity, between individual agency and structures of international politics and between hegemonic knowledge structures and local forms of resistance, that I turn to in the conclusion to this thesis. In those concluding comments, I will be seeking to critically evaluate the role that sexuality might play in a project of re-orienting the stories and theories that explain, define and create international spaces.

CONCLUSION

VITA SEXUALIS

I began this thesis with an epigraph from Ogai Mori's controversial 1909 novel *Vita Sexualis*. The quote sees the novel's protagonist commenting on a philosophical text linking sexual desire with aesthetic appreciation. He asks why the author of the treatise has not taken the theory further, to argue that "every incident in life is a manifestation of sexual desire" and "to demonstrate that sexual desire permeates everything."[1] Intrigued by these implications, the narrator sets out to document his own sexual life history, in an attempt to work through the potentials and pitfalls of reading social relations through the lens of sexual desire.

When it was published, Mori's novel attracted considerable controversy. *Vita Sexualis* matter-of-factly addressed many issues attracting social opprobrium – homosexuality, masturbation, commercial sex, and Japanese erotic artistic and literary traditions – and sailed in the face of social taboos against the public discussion of matters sexual. The Meiji government's response, just three weeks after its initial publication, was to ban the sale and distribution of the issue of the literary magazine in which it appeared. As Haruo Sato explains,

> Because the author treated the problem of sexual desire, the authorities considered this a novel of sexual desire; they could not understand that Ogai's story was primarily philosophic. The reason the authorities thought this grave work might have an injurious effect upon public morals was probably due to the fact that further distribution might help other novels along this line become more popular and fashionable.[2]

Nearly a century later, it is difficult to imagine a work like Ogai's gentle, reflective novel attracting anywhere near the same degree of interest and controversy, in either Japanese or international literary circles. In the realm of cultural production and even social discourse, sexual issues are nowadays spoken about far more freely than was the case when *Vita Sexualis* was first published. Even the last twenty years have seen a sea-change – affecting both Asian and Western cultures – that has brought with it an increase in the social visibility and discussion of sexual issues. Indeed, it is this increased access to information about Asian sexual cultures that has made the present project

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[1] Ogai Mori, *Vita Sexualis*, trans. Kazuji Ninomiya and Sanford Goldstein (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2001), 27.

[2] Haruo Sato as cited in Kazuji Ninomiya and Sanford Goldstein, "Introduction," in *Vita Sexualis*, by Ogai Mori (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1972), 7.

possible.

But from another perspective, the questions Ogai raised in *Vita Sexualis,* and the controversy his work caused, seem to reverberate down the years. For most approaches to international theory, issues of sexuality are still controversial and largely unexplored. In this thesis I have sought to address such intellectual issues and theoretical lacunae. And I have done so by posing – and attempting to answer – a series of questions that bear striking similarities to those raised in and by *Vita Sexualis.* Is sexuality a productive vantage point from which to survey structures created through human social, cultural and political organisation – in this case the socially imagined domain of "the international"? Like Ogai's narrator, I am concerned with exploring how such a project might proceed, and asking how far its methodologies should be taken. Just as importantly, I have tried to remain aware that (as was also the case with *Vita Sexualis*) the novelty of these materials may provoke scepticism – especially from those who see themselves as gatekeepers of existing disciplinary approaches. The thesis has tried to create a space for dialogue with existing intellectual approaches, seeking to convince them of the utility of projects such as this one. But it has also chosen to remain largely outside extant disciplinary structures.

Such an approach accords with the methods suggested by Ashis Nandy, who challenges theorists to consciously and critically identify with marginal positions.[3] He believes that these positions will prove the most productive from which to create new knowledges and garner insights that might help move us beyond the limitations of existing ways of describing the world around us. Nandy writes of how scholars of global affairs must "own up to the responsibility of creating a space at the margins of the present global civilization for a new, plural, political ecology of knowledge."[4] He presents this creation of new analytical forms, sensitive both to difference and to the cultures of the everyday, as a necessarily interim step on the path towards more progressive and inclusive global futures. We must be careful not to overstate the marginality of the everyday life worlds studied here – indeed large parts of the thesis have been dedicated to uncovering how local communities have the agency to influence, define or negotiate international spaces. But in some senses, working with materials on sexuality, and from postcolonial perspectives, positions a project like this as being already at the edge of established modes of describing and managing international spaces. It is appropriate, therefore, in these concluding remarks, to revisit the arguments and

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[3] Ashis Nandy, *Bonfire of Creeds: The Essential Ashis Nandy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 309-11.
[4] Ashis Nandy, "Shamans, Savages, and the Wilderness: On the Audibility of Dissent and the Future of Civilizations," *Alternatives* 14 (1989): 263.

methodology of the thesis, to see how well it might have met Nandy's challenge; to identify and critically evaluate its contribution to the task of telling new stories about the definition, politics and navigation of the international.

The thesis' theoretical intervention commences with an initial choice to invert the usual conceptual techniques of international analysis. Instead of starting at the level of the international as it is conventionally understood, and focussing on issues of state behaviour, economic relations or military posturing, the approach I have taken here deliberately commences at the level of the grassroots and the everyday. I have argued throughout that such an approach can provide us with new ways of telling the stories of the international, grounded in the rich detail and complex interactions that characterise daily life. But this is an unconventional way to proceed. Even those existing studies that have sought to bring materials on gender and (to a lesser extent) sexuality into international studies' frame of reference have concerned themselves more with international, rather than local, spaces and politics. For the most part, they have not asked how the international might be located or given meaning in everyday processes of gender or sexual relations. These limitations are apparent within much of the feminist critique of international theory. Many of these studies have sought to explore how metaphors of gender relations (penetration, conquest, rape) underpin orthodox theoretical concepts of military conflict, colonial acquisition of territory or economic exploitation.[5] Undeniably, these have shed great light on how gender functions as a conceptual framework, providing novel and provocative ways of understanding issues such as sovereignty, nationalism and conflict. However, despite the importance of this contribution, the focus has tended to remain largely on pre-existing international processes and institutions. Much of the story remains untold.

This study could easily have followed such a path and explored the role sexuality might play in the problematics of security. Let us briefly indicate how such a project might have proceeded. There is much material, for instance, pointing to how the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in America were commonly explained with reference to metaphoric understandings and terminologies of sexuality in general, and homosexuality in particular. In the aftermath of the

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[5] See, illustratively: Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

attacks, Jerry Falwell spoke out against homosexuals (along with feminists, pagans and the American Civil Liberties Union) whom he claimed had "caused" the events of 11 September.[6] Fred Phelps of the Westboro Baptist Church in Kansas described the attacks as "God's vengeance on a fag-infested America," drawing an explicit link between this supposed act of divine retribution and the extension of civil liberties to homosexual Americans.[7] Running contrary to these homophobic characterisations, the positive actions of gay and lesbian Americans during the attacks were used to bolster the cause of sexuality rights. Sexual identity politics became a rallying point for those seeking to commemorate (or even, in the case of one individual, canonise) the "Gay Victims and Heroes" of September 11.[8]

Similar meanings were also present in other understandings of the attacks, and of America's military response. Controversy was raised when the Associated Press circulated a photograph showing a US fighter jet aircraft being prepared for launch against the Taliban regime and suspected al Qaida terrorist camps in Afghanistan. On the bomb attached to the underbelly of the plane in the photograph, the words "High Jack This Fags [*sic*]" had been scrawled – presumably as a "message" to the intended recipients on the ground.[9] Speculation swirled in the American tabloid press that "World Trade Centre terrorist Mohamed Atta and several of his bloody henchmen led secret gay lives for years."[10] Finally, a 2002 "Letter to America", attributed to Osama bin Laden, had the al Qaida leader himself quoted as portraying homosexuality as one of the characteristics of a Western civilisation in decline: "We call you to be a people of manners, principles, honour, and purity; to reject the immoral acts of fornication, homosexuality, intoxicants, gamblings, and trading with interest."[11]

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[6] "Editorial: Jerry-Miad / Falwell Blames Liberals, Gays, Judges for Terror," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 17 September 2001.

[7] Fred Phelps, "God Hates America! A Message to the Nation in the Wake of the World Trade Center Tragedy (Part 3)," Westboro Baptist Church, http://www.godhatesamerica.com/pdf/GHA03.pdf. As of February 2003 the number of press releases issued under the title "God Hates America" had reached 101 (the latest of which was released on 11 March 2002). These are available at http://www.godhatesamerica.com/html/fliers.html.

[8] "September 11, 2001: Gay Victims & Heroes," Lombardi-Nash, http://www.angelfire.com/fl3/uraniamanuscripts/sept11.html. A campaign calling for the canonisation of the homosexual Roman Catholic priest, Father Mychal Judge, has been organised. See, further, http://www.saintmychal.com/.

[9] Bob Roehr, "Navy Apologizes for 'High Jack This Fags'," *Windy City Times*, 24 October 2001, Randy Dotinga, "Navy Photo Shows Antigay Slur on Bomb," Gay.com/PlanetOut.com Network, http://www.planetout.com/pno/news/article.html?2001/10/12/1. See also: Charlotte Cooper, "Gay Service Members Disgusted by US Military Homophobia," RainbowNetwork.com, http://www.rainbownetwork.com/content/News.asp?newsid=2241.

[10] See: Michael Kimmel, "Gender, Class and Terrorism," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 8 February 2002, Michelangelo Signorile, "The Mohamed Atta Files," Newsweek Web Exclusive, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/3067491/. A fascinating parallel exists here with the depiction in popular American culture of Saddam Hussein as a homosexual/sodomite during the Gulf War of 1990. See, especially, Chapter 1, in Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992). Such characterisations continued after the 1990 war: Mark Driscoll, "Reverse Postcoloniality," *Social Text* 22, no. 1 (2004).

[11] Osama bin Laden, (Attributed), "Full Text: Bin Laden's 'Letter to America'," *The Observer*, 24 November 2002.

Taken together, these vignettes encapsulate a range of the issues I have pursued in this study. Each of them reflects a certain kind of response – be it individual or communal – to an intrinsically transnational event. Whether it is conservative Southern Baptist Christianity, fundamentalist Islam, the traditions of modern American warfare or even the global imprints of the gay and lesbian liberation movement,[12] each of these accounts of the events, causes and ramifications of September 11 draws upon a complex blend of highly politicised, culturally embedded, and personally comprehended narratives of sexuality. These examples indicate the ways in which representations of international events can be interlaced with concepts derived from sexuality's position and functioning in society. And they touch on issues – the distinction between self and other, processes of worlding, the metaphoric meanings of sexuality – that we have explored through other materials elsewhere in the thesis.

Still, if broadening the canvas in this way might well have corroborated many of the themes I have developed, almost certainly it would not have done justice to the rich ambivalence of the linkage between sexuality and security. This is clearly an important project. But it is not one that can simply be appended to this thesis. The problematic is a different one, involving a study of the interrelationship of security and insecurity. As such, it would necessitate an engagement with the tradition of Western security thought[13] and one, moreover, informed by psychoanalytic theory

In contrast, this thesis has taken its bearings from postcolonial theory. To return to the foundational importance of the everyday, I have already acknowledged the classic writings of Michel de Certeau. Nonetheless, my readings of transnational processes of international affairs in the everyday have been more influenced by scholars of gender, the occult, local geographies and the encounter between different cultures.[14] Here I am in accordance with the methods suggested by the Subaltern Studies collective who have attempted to examine national politics, transnational flows and intercultural relations from the points of view of those subjected by such processes and compelled to manage their influence.[15] This thesis also enacts this classically postcolonial manoeuvre. First and foremost it is concerned with the politics of the everyday. But this is not

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[12] I owe the phrase to the title of Barry D. Adam, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and André Krouwel, eds., *The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics: National Imprints of a Worldwide Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999).

[13] Something of the breadth of this task is indicated by Michael Dillon's foundational study: Michael Dillon, *Politics of Security: Towards a Political Philosophy of Continental Thought* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

[14] I share Peter Mandaville's assertion that "some of the best accounts of how we relate internationally are to be found outside the conventional boundaries of international relations": Peter Mandaville, "Reading the State from Elsewhere: Towards an Anthropology of the Postnational," *Review of International Studies* 28 (2002): 199.

[15] See generally: Ranajit Guha, ed., *A Subaltern Studies Reader 1986-1995* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

some utopian and artificially conceived "authentic" everyday, kept in isolation from the traditional structures of international politics. Rather, it is an everyday that interacts with those processes and structures concerned with the maintenance of order in the world - above all, the state. The materials that structure the thesis' arguments are all of the contemporary moment. Each of them demonstrates how the everyday life worlds of postcolonial citizens in Asia are subject to broader structures of regulation and control: the nationalist definitions of modern Singapore, the rhetorical landscapes of political debate in Mahathir's Malaysia, the new form of the East Asian global city, and the ideologies of disease management that shape the Thai response to the worldwide HIV epidemic. But they each also signal the possibilities for the citizens and subjects of both the postcolonial state and the new realities of postcolonial global politics to intervene in and through those authority structures. The case studies suggests that everyday realm is not just one in which the repercussions of international political processes are made manifest and open to study. Rather it is a location where many of those processes commence and take shape, and where aspects of the international are both defined and negotiated. The everyday stands as source and subject of international theorising in its own right. This has far-reaching implications for those involved in developing international theory. It suggests that the domain where actions of theoretical interest take place is far broader than we might previously have thought; certainly it is broader than most existing theoretical models would allow.

The postcolonial method I have adopted here encourages international theory to be more open towards these broader, alternative source materials. In following this path, I have been concerned to explore how processes that initially appear to be embedded solely in the everyday can (in some situations at least) reach out into, and engage with, the international. It is in exploring these cases, where meanings are able to diffuse between the grassroots and the international, that we can begin to identify new theoretical possibilities. The question thus becomes one of how we can analyse those instances where aspects of everyday life worlds engage or enter into international spaces, and shape new modes of understanding existing structures.[16]

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[16] Here I follow Homi Bhabha who writes: "[w]hat must be mapped as a new international space of discontinuous historical realities is, in fact, the problem of signifying the interstitial passages and processes of cultural difference that are inscribed in the 'in-between,' in the temporal break-up that weaves the 'global text.'": Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 217.

One way of addressing this question is to focus on sexuality. As we have seen, sexuality has rarely been academically recognised as a source of international theory. It is individual, personal and messy, lacking the predictability and analytical precision in which social-scientific theory likes to cloak itself. But in many ways, it is precisely these aspects that make it such a productive source from which to pursue readings of the international. My approach to reading sexuality is one that resonates with the title of Ogai's novel *Vita Sexualis*. I have sought to highlight the importance of individual sex lives, as well as the wider roles sex plays *in* life. The cast of characters that populate the pages of this dissertation, from prostitutes to politicians, soldiers to stewardesses, all inhabit both personal and socially constructed notions of sexuality. Sexuality, as I have presented it here, is at once deeply personal, and mediated through broader structures of class, culture, nation, religion and ethnicity. It is both ubiquitous and specific.

Identity, therefore, becomes a key category linking together the various studies that make up the dissertation. This functions on many levels: the crafting of individual or politicised sexual identities, the imbrications of sexuality and national identity, the ways in which sexuality shapes personal and communal interactions with international processes and global flows. The lived experience of sexuality and the ways in which it is performed and experienced, is central not just to the outcomes of my arguments, but to the ways in which they have been made. While individually distinctive, each of the various case studies here highlights the tension between individual and collective understandings of appropriate sexual behaviour, and between differing cultural or political conceptions of sexual morality and identity. On the first issue, consider the coercive policies designed to create compulsory gendered heterosexualities in the Singapore military and workforce, or the characterisations of the HIV positive Thai citizen as culturally and biologically contaminated; to be identified and corralled by the technologies of medical science so as not to jeopardise socially or nationally approved sexual economies. On the latter point, witness the deployment of discourses of sodomy in the creation of an East-West divide in Malaysia, or the management of differing aspects of urbanism, cosmopolitanism and globalism in the creation of differing homosexual identities in contemporary Hong Kong. Each of these examples helps us to identify cracks in the normally strictly maintained theoretical barriers between everyday and international spaces. They challenge orthodox conceptions about which organisations and structures have agency within international spaces. Further, they signal the fact that sexual identities, practises, and the social domain of sex are positions from which understandings of the

international are derived at everyday, almost instinctual, levels.

Foucault has reminded us that "[s]exuality is not the most intractable element in power relations, but rather one of those endowed with the greatest instrumentality: useful for the greatest number of maneuvers and capable of serving as a point of support, as a linchpin, for the most varied strategies."[17] In the various case studies we have explored, we can begin to see how sexuality functions as an instrument in broader power struggles. Indeed sexuality serves both make and to remake intrinsically political relationships. The postcolonial state – witness my earlier discussions of Malaysia and Singapore – uses it to define and maintain authorised and compliant national identities. But at the same time, sexuality emerges as a means of resisting, even challenging, national and social structures of authority, and staking a claim to influence over international processes and politics. In other chapters, we saw how sexuality is a commodity of interest to processes of international capitalism, whether in the deployment of Orientalist imagery in tourist and airline advertising, in the rhetoric of cities needing to foster sexual minority communities in order to succeed in the new global "creative economy", or in the creation of commercial sex industries. This suggests that not only are some sexual identities perceived as being of economic value, but that as a consequence those who inhabit them are able to exert at least some control over the international processes that inscribe such valuations.

In all of these readings, sexuality travels. Sexual subjectivities as we have explored them here are mobile, circulating within and between Asia and the West, working to reshape the contours of society, of politics and of understandings of the international. Sexualities are a key site where Asian societies attempt to deal with difference. This is visible in the historical encounter with European colonialism, in processes of regional integration and dialogue, and in the reception, resistance and reformation of contemporary flows of people, capital, identities and ideologies. In some instances, this process of using sexualised difference is perceived positively: it can be used strategically to attract international attention and navigate its effects. But in other readings, sexuality stands as the boundary marker – in Nagel's terms the "ethnosexual frontier" – that defines self-identity (personal, social or national) in the face of sexual Otherness.[18] This is similar to what Bhabha has identified as the simultaneous fear and fascination that shaped interactions between

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[17] Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (London, United Kingdom: Penguin Books, 1976), 103.

[18] Joane Nagel, "Ethnicity and Sexuality," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 113.

both coloniser and colonised in the nineteenth century.[19] The echoes of this continue to shape Asian politics today. We have traced this mutual desire and distrust in the various chapter of the thesis: between the colonial and the contemporary and between Western and Asian modes of understanding and performing sexuality, politics and nation. This is in large part about the politics of identity. And it is reading those issues of identity that sexuality evokes when it encounters cultural or national difference that can impel us to rethink the nature of international spaces and the ways in which they are academically studied and defined.

Two studies – one from within feminist theory and the other from the postcolonial critique of international relations – help flesh out these issues. Christine Sylvester has called for what she terms a "world-travelling" approach to the practise of academic feminism and most especially to the encounter between Western and African feminisms. This involves a commitment to identifying and acknowledging those "methods of speaking in, through, and across differences – methods by which different identity feminisms and geospatial locations within them become mobile in ways that juggle and cross borderlands".[20] For Sylvester, this entails theory being open to the fact that the agency to navigate borders and boundaries, to enter into certain spaces, and to influence politics, is not and should not be regarded as theoretically predetermined. Rather we need theoretical models and scholarly approaches that recognise and celebrate the fact that different politics and opportunities are brought about by instances of physical, social or intellectual movement, in ways that both rely on, but also transcend, difference. There are obvious parallels here with my presentation of sexuality. Indeed, I have argued that act of sex itself can arguably be thought of as just such a site where differences can be simultaneously reinforced and overcome. Accordingly, the practices and the identities of sexuality should not be read as being about either the celebration or the denial of difference – in the cases I have studied here there are almost invariably aspects of both. Rather, our theoretical goal must be to identify the outcomes and inconsistencies that occur when sexuality traverses difference, to look for aspects of agency and the creation of new modes of understanding. If we can do this we might have progressed at least partly down the path towards what Sankaran Krishna has described as new modes of constructing international theory. Taking his lead from postcolonialism, he believes these new theoretical approaches should write accounts that seek to create worlds were differences "are not the occasion

[19] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 85-92.
[20] Christine Sylvester, "African and Western Feminisms: World-Traveling the Tendencies and Possibilities," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 20, no. 4 (1995): 945.

either for chauvinistic celebration or for annihilatory violence, but just simply are."[21]

As we have already seen, sexuality has worked to shape concepts of identity in and between national, social and cultural spaces. But like most processes of identity formation, this is a process that looks in two directions. Concepts of sexuality not only mark out or inform the boundary between self and other, they tell powerful stories about the nature of the self in comparison with that other. This functions primarily as a form of worlding: the attribution of particular tropes of gender or sexuality to other cultures, societies or geographical spaces in support of particular political goals. Such processes featured prominently in the colonial encounter in Asia; that they continue to resonate throughout today's Asia we have seen in every chapter of this thesis.[22] They are visible in Singapore's reinvention and celebration of its colonial past; in Hong Kong citizens' attempts to distinguish themselves from both their former colonial overlord and their new national proprietor; in Malaysian appeals to a past of sexual purity and fixity; and in the ambivalent elite-driven relationship between external modernity and domestic politics in Thailand.

Much of the story I have told here is about how, for many in East and South East Asia, the international entered into society via its alliances, firstly with European colonialism, and latterly with structures of Euro-American global modernity. These brought with them pressures to conform to certain models of sexual identity and behaviour. The accepted version of events paints the emergence of the postcolonial state and its attendant structures of nationalism as central to the enforcement in Asian societies of particular sexual mandates, usually tied to issues of social organisation, biological and cultural reproduction and appropriately modern and nationalistic behaviour. We tracked these procedures closely in the chapters on Singapore and Malaysia. In the Malaysian case, we saw the inversion of colonial and Orientalist tropes of Asian sexual immorality by the postcolonial state in an ambiguous attempt to shore up its own conception of national identity and distinctiveness. Similarly, our reading of Singaporean materials exposed the restrictive range of authorised gendered and sexual behaviours permitted by the politics of postcolonial

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[21] Sankaran Krishna, "The Importance of Being Ironic: A Postcolonial View of Critical International Relations Theory," *Alternatives* 18 (1993): 407.

[22] On the colonial aspects of this see: Ronald Hyam, "Empire and Sexual Opportunity," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 14, no. 2 (1986). For a contemporary example see: Chris Berry, Annette Hamilton, and Laleen Jayamanne, eds., *The Filmmaker and the Prostitute: Dennis O'Rourke's The Good Woman of Bangkok* (Sydney: Power Publications, Power Institute of Fine Arts, The University of Sydney, 1996).

nationalism. Readings such as this suggest that in today's Asia – when it comes to sexuality at least – Occidentalism might be just as strong a source of political meanings and social understandings as Orientalism.

Yet the examples we have explored also raise questions about the extent of the postcolonial state's ability to know or control the outcomes of its attempts at using the sexual as a tool in broader political debates. Because of its historical association with the international – in both its colonial and globalizing guises – to invoke sexuality is also to call upon a range of additional meanings derived from the international arena. These function to provide opportunities rather than just enact closures. For example, the internationalised dimensions of a nationalistically endorsed figure like the Singapore Girl, gives certain women some leeway to avoid the state's attempts to impose its versions of appropriate sexual or gendered behaviour and offers them the chance to explore cosmopolitan and other national spaces. Similarly the external meanings that informed Malaysian understandings of sodomy – encompassing Western-style sexual identity movements, global discourses of sexuality rights and the connections drawn between external modernity and national sexual cultures – acted to shift many of the terms of Malaysian political debate and let loose social, political and even sexual changes that were quite at odds with elite interests.

Elsewhere, we have explored how these issues might function in spaces that – at least in some respects – differ from the expected norms of either orthodox international theory or postcolonial studies. In chapter six, for example, I explored the ways in which the new space of the global city structured and encouraged a series of individual and communal interventions into international politics that proceeded under the banner of sexual identity politics. I argued that in the Hong Kong case, a conjunction of a weakened nationalism, a desire to stake claims to cultural and urban as well as individual and social identities, and the spatial reconfigurations wrought by the transition to the global city form meant that greater possibilities existed both for sexual identity formation and for those identities to engage international issues, politics and spaces. Similarly, in our reading of Thailand, I contended that while in colonial times the nation managed to remain free of formal European annexation, its relationship to structures of colonial and global modernity continue to impact the ways in which it manages its citizens' sexual behaviour. I presented this through a reading of Thai elites' colonial and contemporary relationships with external technologies of disease management. This highlighted the tension between the nation's unique patternings of

national and postcolonial identity, and the possibilities for even the most marginalised of its citizens to utilize the nation's confident relationship with external modernities to articulate their own relationship with international structures, spaces and politics. In this case, we looked at how there are very real limits on the postcolonial state's ability to hold back the influences of external structures of modernity. While this is commonly understood in terms of cultural flows spread through mass media forms and the penetration of global capitalism, in the Thai scenario we touched on how the power of modern medicine rendered that body of knowledge difficult, if not impossible, to resist.

So the issues of spatiality and of worlding to which sexuality calls our attention also help expand the frame of reference of international theory. They demonstrate that the patternings of postcoloniality in today's Asia are never fixed or uniform. Above all they cannot be contained by simplistic binary divisions between North and South. Certainly there are aspects of boundedness and fixity at work here – most obviously the containment of certain sexual identities, practises or even disease within certain spatial or conceptual boundaries. But, returning to our earlier discussion on how sexualities travel, an awareness of the spatial dimensions that influence sexuality and in which it finds expression, encourages awareness of the linkages between everyday worlds and global processes. We find issues of sexuality on escalators, in public parks, in airports and medical clinics. But what we have tracked here is how these are rarely about just local or domestic understandings of sexuality. They reach out into international spaces and allow individuals, their sexualities and even their daily experience of sex to engage, even manipulate, international processes and meanings that international theory would normally paint as being well beyond the scope of their agency. The life of the individual here catches something of the broader social and political elements of national and world affairs, a process so beautifully captured in fiction by Ogai Mori in *Vita Sexualis* and in scholarly prose by Ashis Nandy in *The Intimate Enemy*.[23]

There would seem, then, to be a strong case for analyzing the colonial and contemporary narratives of sex and sexuality as they find expression in different places around the world. Other instances

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[23] Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983). Nandy focuses on the (sexed and gendered) lives of two representative figures – Rudyard Kipling and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi – in order to explore the complex psychology of the relationship between India and its colonial rulers.

where sexuality has carried internationalized metaphoric meanings would appear to be broadly compatible with the sorts of analyses I have undertaken here. Building out from my reading of Malaysia, for example, much could be gained from exploring issues such as the sodomy trial of former Zimbabwean President Canaan Banana, and his successor, Robert Mugabe's vociferous assertion that homosexuality is a Western cultural imposition; the use of anti-gay rhetoric to reinforce African norms and traditions by Daniel arap Moi in Kenya; the depiction of the homosexual as unworthy of citizenship in Sam Nujoma's Namibia or even the assertions of those fundamentalist Christians in the United States who have sought to explain the events of September 11 2001 by presenting them as divine retribution for a nation mired in sodomitical excess and moral uncertainty. [24]

But in these concluding comments it is proper to also consider the limitations of the approach I have espoused here. For instance, while they may not initially have been issues that were conceived in terms of traditional international politics, the events canvassed in each chapter of the thesis all refer to public instances where sexual difference entered the political debates of the societies and cultures in question. What remains absent from scholarship thus far is an analysis of whether, and in what ways, sexuality might carry internationalized meanings in the day-to-day life of Asian societies in the absence of major social, cultural or political attention being paid to the issue. Further, it seems to me that it would be productive to ask why sexuality emerges as an icon of international flows and their impacts in the political debate of some formerly colonized societies and not in others? To again return to our Malaysian example, what would be the significance – and how might we read - cases where the sodomitical practice of national leaders did not lead to major controversy or the rhetorical deployment of sodomy's metaphoric meanings?[25]

Thinking through such hypothetical scenarios highlights the multiply constituted and slippery nature of sexualities and sexual identities. Indeed, certain scholars have called on those

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[24] On Zimbabwe see: Chris Dunton and Mai Palmberg, *Human Rights and Homosexuality in Southern Africa* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstituet, 1996), Neville Hoad, "Between the White Man's Burden and the White Man's Disease: Tracking Lesbian and Gay Human Rights in Southern Africa," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 5, no. 4 (1999). On Kenya see: Wanjira Kiama, "Where Are Kenya's Homosexuals?," *Inter-Press Service*, 14 August 1998. On Namibia see: Christof Maletsky, "Govt Planning to Criminalise Gays," *The Namibian*, 9 November 1998. On the United States of America see: Phelps, "God Hates America."

[25] Peter Jackson's work is instructive here: "[I]t is widely rumoured in Thailand that several recent Prime Ministers have been homosexual. One of these former Prime Ministers was a member of the Thai nobility. Another was head of the Thai army before entering politics, never married, and is now a member of the Privy Council…The sexuality of these men has occasionally been raised as a political issue by critics and parliamentary opponents, and gossip and apocryphal anecdotes about them also circulate widely. However, while the political decisions and the legacies of these men's respective periods of political leadership are publicly debated in Thailand, their sexuality is not.": Peter A. Jackson, "*Kathoey >< Gay >< Man: The Historical Emergence of Gay Male Identity in Thailand*," in *Sites of Desire, Economies of Pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 176.

working with sexuality studies in a transnational frame to exercise an "ethical refusal" to conduct work that might render the complex and often contradictory transnational flows of meaning surrounding issues of sexuality in overly simplistic conceptual terms or in ways that transforms them into a settled and universally comprehensible category of analysis.[26] This principled stance, which recognizes both the very human locations, as well as the increasingly transnational constitution, of sexualities has much to recommend it. It is tempting, but always dangerous, to generalize: to take the case study and transform it into a theoretical axiom.

The nature of the materials I have introduced here cautions against such an approach. While there may well be outward similarities between the thesis' case studies and other instances of sexuality becoming an internationally imbued issue, it is important to retain a critical awareness of the nuances of nation, culture, and religion to which the personally and socially embedded qualities of sexuality and sexual morality act to alert us. As Roland Bleiker puts it, "[o]nly a constant dialectical process of disturbing and rethinking can maintain hope for a dialogical understanding among peoples and prevent critical approaches to wor(l)d(s) politics from eventually turning into new orthodoxies."[27] Certainly there is a need to go beyond what I have been able to explore here in search of yet wider and more inclusive approaches to studying the effects of international flows within social and national spaces. We might ask, for instance, to what extent a focus on the international, and on rhetorical utterances and materials produced essentially by political elites and the socially empowered, acts to blur the very real distinctions within and between cultures, religions, geographical areas and even individuals, which operate within postcolonial societies? For instance, very little work exists on the differences between how such issues might be viewed by those living in regional or rural areas and those in political, commercial, or administrative urban centres.

Similarly, we must remain aware of the overwhelming influence –in the realms of everyday life as well as in the corridors of political power and academe – of very different, usually mainstream renderings of the international. Bleiker has argued that "[t]o forget orthodox IR theory is not to ignore the IR practices that have framed our realities."[28] So much of the conceptual

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[26] Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé and Martin F. Manalansan, IV., "Introduction: Dissident Sexualities, Alternative Globalisms," in *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*, ed. Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé and Martin F. Manalansan, IV., Sexual Cultures: New Directions from the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies (New York and London: New York University Press, 2002), 4.

[27] Roland Bleiker, "Forget IR Theory," in *The Zen of International Relations: IR Theory from East to West*, ed. Stephen Chan and Roland Bleiker (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave, 2001), 61.

[28] Ibid., 39.

framework and intellectual vocabulary through which we conceptualise international processes and spaces is derived from these orthodox understandings. In fact, many of my arguments here, while seeking to move beyond such orthodoxies have still relied on descriptive language and scholarly frameworks derived from those bodies of work they have set out to critique. Thus, every time we attempt to read off the politics and nature of the international from sexuality, we must be aware that sexuality can only ever be a part of our analyses. Other narratives and other approaches crowd in, each with its own compelling demands – and urgent questions. How can the narratives I have introduced here help explain issues of materiality, access to resources, technology, or individual economic independence? How well can transnational readings of sexuality account for the very real and significant issues of gender, caste, geography, and poverty that might be grouped broadly under the head of subalternity? Might there not be very real dangers in theorising international politics in ways that might obscure the power of states or transnational economics? When it comes to reading the international postcolonially, these sorts of questions must assume central importance. I am convinced that analyses of sexuality have much to offer a broader project of rethinking the politics and contours of the contemporary international. But at the same time, I am wary of the millennial enthusiasm of commentators like John and Jean Comaroff, who wrote in their provocative introductory essay to the "Millennial Capitalism" issue of *Public Culture*, that in the current global conjecture, "the personal is the only politics there is".[29] Like Ogai's narrator in *Vita Sexualis*, I would regard any attempt to paint sexuality as a universal explanatory category, able to provide a handle on all theoretical issues and world events, as being at the very least overly glib or "clever". While the strength of the Comaroff's analysis lies in its suggestive power, it dismisses too easily other avenues of inquiry. Presenting sexuality in this way would do a multiple disservice to the intellectual study of international. For example, other aspects of everyday life might prove to be equally fertile sources of information about international processes, and could provide very different insights.[30] To argue that sexuality is just one of the many sources of knowledge competing to give meaning to the concept of the international is to neither downplay its significance nor disallow the search for alternatives.

To speak of the international this way – as a conceptual container that holds no definite or

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[29] Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, "Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming," *Public Culture* 12, no. 2 (2000): 305.

[30] A good example is the Comaroff's earlier work on occut economies, that I touched on in "Sodomy as Metaphor", above. See: Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, "Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: Notes from the South African Postcolony," *American Ethnologist* 26, no. 2 (1999).

fixed meanings – is to reference Ernesto Laclau's powerful work *Emancipation(s)*.[31] This study is concerned with exploring the implications of how certain terms function as "empty signifiers"; concepts that lack concrete, specific definitions. In Laclau's words, such terms enable "various political forces…[to] compete in their efforts to present their particular objectives as those which carry out the filling of that lack."[32] If we think of "the international" as just such an empty signifier, then it is possible to think see how orthodox disciplinary approaches, state practices and the multifarious facets of everyday life are all contesting to in some ways imbue the category with meaning. Obviously, some sources of knowledge have assumed privileged positions in this process, due to historical happenstance or the stringent guarding of intellectual turf. For the international, such privileged sources would obviously include those mainstream disciplinary structures that have attempted to arrogate to themselves the exclusive right to write theories of the international. But the analyses I have pursued here demonstrate that these are by no means the only sources of meaning contributing to the ways in which the international is defined, debated or consumed. They are one among many; supplemented, resisted and hybridised with meanings drawn from the everyday and the grassroots of societies.

The broadening out of source materials and the pursuit of alternative modes of reading processes of international change that I have begun here points towards a potential reconceptualisation of international politics - and indeed the very nature and constitution of international spaces. Yet the issues that such analyses raise are unsettling and provocative for students of politics, and even more so for those used to working within disciplinary approaches to the international. They take us further and further from the abstractions that have for so long characterized studies of the international and ever-closer to readings of the ways in which everyday life references the international and infuses it with meaning. In a way, the difficulties in sketching out – or even predicting – the shape and effects of such a process indicates both the seductive simplicity of established disciplinary categories of international relations as well as their entrenched place as part of the furniture of our minds. The task of thinking, theorizing and working beyond such categories must proceed by taking seriously the personal, identity based and socio-cultural ways in which the international is created and consumed, as well as acknowledging and reflecting the obvious complexity of the contemporary postcolonial world. And, as I have sought to do here,

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[31] Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (London: Verso, 1996).
[32] Ibid., 44.

it can start by seeking to identify the locations and politics where new plural futures might begin to emerge. Sexuality is at least one site where such processes occur. It serves as an element in the power struggle between ruler and ruled, state and citizen, global and local. More importantly, it enables us to start thinking about those practices that break down the borders separating everyday, national and international spaces and which can help burst the theoretical boundaries of established modes of thinking.

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