

**Sandeep Bakshi, Suhraiya Jivraj, Silvia Posocco,
*Decolonizing Sexualities. Transnational Perspectives,
Critical Interventions***

Edited by Sandeep Bakshi, Suhraiya Jivraj, and Silvia Posocco. Oxford:
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Reviewed by Fiona McCANN

The front cover of this collection of articles, poems, and personal and collective experiences which deal with both the theory and praxis of decolonizing sexualities features a reproduction of a work of art discussed in one of the chapters by the artist-practitioner in question, Raju Rage. The collage portrait image foregrounds an ambiguously gendered body and the threat of racist violence, and undercuts the amalgamation of monstrosity, terrorism, and non-heteronormative sexuality that has such currency in Europe and North America. As such, this arresting cover is perfectly in keeping with the issues explored in this volume, with the multiple perspectives privileged, and with the refreshingly original theoretical and militant content.

The book is divided into four parts but it is also framed at the beginning by a powerful foreword and prologue by Walter D. Mignolo and Nawo C. Crawford respectively, and at the end by an equally powerful afterword by Aniruddha Dutta. The two opening pieces emphasise the importance of understanding that colonial differences, far from being ontological, are constituted and sustained by people, institutions, and languages, and they point out the necessity of responding to *imperial* geopolitics and body-politics with *decolonial* geopolitics and body-politics. This collection of essays aims to stretch well beyond the academy, as the choice of publisher, Counterpress, a new, not-for-profit, open-access publisher, shows.

One of the other strong points of this volume is its resolutely transnational approach. It also refuses to privilege one form of action or reflection over another, and so one finds poetry by Mia Nikasimo alongside an article on anti-LGBTI Legislation in several African countries by Sokari Ekine and a self-reflective piece by the artist-performer Raju Rage. Placing these pieces in the sub part entitled “Challenge,” alongside others like “Notes from the Classroom” by Humaira Saeed, or “In Defence of a Radical Trans Perspective in the French Context” by João Gabriell, also indicates that art is not just about creation and aesthetics, but also about fundamentally challenging modes of thinking and of being, and that politics and aesthetics are inseparable.

The second section, “Create,” proposes a similar dialogue between Sandeep Bakshi’s article on “Decoloniality, Queerness, and Giddha,” which deconstructs processes of “effective epistemological decolonization” (88) and analyses the re-emergence of queer as a decolonial praxis, a series of personal reflections by Diriye Osman, and Sirma Bilge’s research on social justice praxis and her call for “radical relationality coalitional resistance” (119). The third section, “All Power Activism,” proposes two collectively written articles, the first by Wala AlQaisiya, Ghaith Hilal, and Haneen Maikay on “Dismantling the Image of the Palestinian Homosexual” and the second by three members of the group *Lesbiennes of Color (LOC)* on “Decolonial Activism in White French Feminist Land.” The first of these articles hones in on the ways in which certain hierarchies deem some fetishized bodies worthy of saving (Palestinian homosexual bodies) and others easily maimed or killed, and challenges what the authors call the “hegemony of Western LGBT Organizing” (137). The second article explains the origins of the *LOC*,

covers their campaign to remove the offensive and homonationalist official poster of the 2011 Paris Pride March, and asserts their opposition to the lucrative “manipulation of emotion by the state and capitalist media” (149) in the wake of the *Charlie Hebdo* attack in 2015. Fatima EL-Tayeb’s article pursues these issues by observing a refusal in European societies to accept that there is a deeply-embedded structural racism at work, pinpointing the ways in which queerness becomes acceptable only if it is understood to be “compatible with a neoliberal project that produces new forms of exclusion” (160), and ending with a re-affirmation of the necessity of a broadly intersectional approach to dismantling oppression. The final two articles in this section, by Jun Zubillaga-Pow and Suhraiya Jivraj, deal with sexuality and religion in Singapore and London, and both offer a deconstruction of stereotypes.

The final section of the collection, entitled “Now,” proposes an interesting mix of case studies (Dervla Zaynad Shannahan and Tamsila Tauqir’s “Building an Inclusive Mosque” and Arturo Sánchez García’s “Reasons for Optimism: Same Sex Marriage in Mexico City”), an article written by three members of the group Against Equality on why the co-optation of LGBT people by the mainstream, although “enticing,” only reinforces other oppressive structures and should therefore be resisted, and two articles by Silvia Posocco and Paola Bacchetta. Posocco’s article, “(Decolonizing) The Ear of the Other: Subjectivity, Ethics and Politics in Question,” demonstrates how “wounded whiteness” works to re-centre whiteness, displacing in the process those who are affected by racist aggression. Paola Bacchetta’s article, “QTPOC Critiques of ‘Post-Raciality,’ Segregationality, Coloniality and Capitalism in France,” returns to many of the issues raised in the collection, and focuses on bringing to light radical practices and analyses that have been largely ignored. She historicises various different movements in France, and highlights the ways in which some groups have been founded and manipulated by political parties, and like her co-contributors, emphasises the necessity of resisting oppression not as an individual phenomenon (racism, capitalism, gender, sexuality among others), but as “co-constitutive of each other and of current conditions in France” (278).

Aniruddha Dutta’s “Afterword” reiterates the immense importance of this volume of articles, highlighting the significance of including locations of knowledge production situated both inside and well outside of academia. This final contribution fittingly adopts a global approach and functions as a reminder that although POC and QTPOC solidarity is extremely important in putting pressure on institutions in the Global North, one should not forget for all that the existence of various forms of collusion and “complicity in neocolonialism and empire among ‘people of color’” (286).

This is a highly stimulating collection of academic articles, case studies, reflections, art and poetry, and the editors have done a truly impressive job in weaving them together. There is no doubt that this is a very significant contribution to the fields of postcolonial or decolonial studies and queer studies.