

On the politics of queer resistance and survival: Athena Athanasiou in conversation with Vassiliki Kolocotroni and Dimitris Papanikolaou

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Bio

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(Nisos, 2016). She has been a fellow at the Center for the Study of Social Difference at Columbia University. She is a member of the editorial advisory board of the journals *Critical Times* and *Feminist Formations*.

Vassiliki Kolocotroni and Dimitris Papanikolaou: *Thank you for agreeing to contribute to our special issue by answering our questions and perhaps posing more of your own. Much of the critical thinking and writing represented by the essays published in this volume is indebted to your vision and vigilance as a theorist, teacher and activist. May we start by a simple question? Is there a New Queer Greece? If yes, where? In what tactics, movements, collectivities, cultural work, demands can it be found?*

Athena Athanasiou: Thank you, Vassiliki and Dimitri, for this conversation, and this question which is posed in a highly charged moment of political grief, in the immediate aftermath of Zak Kostopoulos's death after a brutal public beating in the centre of Athens.¹ This horrific occurrence has elicited outrage and collective antiracist protest, LGBTQI rallies have taken place demanding justice for Zak, and the three of us have signed the petition 'The responsibility of our grief', endorsed by more than 250 academics from universities in and outside Greece.² A queer activist and drag performer committed to raising awareness about HIV through the organization 'Positive Voice', Zak was kicked to death by a shop owner allegedly 'protecting his property' and a mob of male onlookers and policemen, as he was lying wounded on the ground, unarmed, utterly degraded and dislocated, radically exposed to homophobic and police brutality, designated as a dangerous and disposable body. When the policemen who arrived at the scene, instead of stopping the assault,

handcuffed Zak, who lay bleeding on the ground, rather than his assailants, it became outrageously clear whose vulnerability mattered and whose didn't. To compound the dehumanizing 'justice' meted out to Zak, his body was transported to the hospital to be certified dead on arrival with the handcuffs still on.

Survival emerges as a politically saturated struggle. The queer body, radically exposed to brutality, is construed by the lynching mob as inherently threatening and dangerous, and thus police violence is justified not only as self-defense but also as protection of public (heteronormative, white, national, bourgeois) safety. So we might consider: what claims of social justice and political freedom are we making, then, when we come together to share our grief for Zak's unjust death but also to affirm his life and practices of freedom despite and against the legitimation of police violence? And by what means do we draw inspiration on Zak's practices of freedom when we resist and oppose the normativity of racist hate crimes? The next scheduled demonstration is fittingly named after a phrase used by Zak in an interview: 'Violence isn't my thing'. I think we can discern here a possibility for an ethics of nonviolence as a mode of political embodiment, whereby vulnerability as a differentiating effect of power is not disavowed and grief is collectively and relationally mobilized. For me, this possibility does not denote a moral pacifist position but rather stands as a political articulation of bodies on the line, avowing their vulnerability, opposing police force, and refusing to be violated. Can we imagine a world through this possibility of political subjectivity?

VK & DP: Thank you for this opening frame, which gives your answer to our questions an added poignancy and prescience. It is worth noting that video footage of the events that led to Zak's death, which were circulated widely online, played a

crucial role in this case, perhaps becoming a determining factor for the way the public reacted. Given your own past philosophical interventions on the subject, perhaps a question about public appearance would be in place?

AA: Indeed, how do we think about the appearance of bodies in the public sphere?

What happens when TV screens and social media are saturated with images of police brutality? What kind of visual and sensual familiarity is enacted in watching the video footage showing Zak's lynching? One hopes that this video footage can be used as visual proof of police violence in the fight for justice. However, the repeatedly aired images become part of a visual field already entrenched in and infused with racist and homophobic structural violence that determines who counts as a recognizable subject and whose vulnerability matters. Surely, the repeated TV images seemed to manufacture a securitarian consent and initially worked to further anaesthetize those who 'empathized' with the assailants and were too quick to state that 'he got what he deserved'. But, at the same time, many people were mobilized to political action, despite and against the established order – and ordinariness – of heteronormative bourgeois apathy. However, in and of itself, even the most explicit visual evidence cannot be guaranteed to be taken as indisputable 'proof' of police brutality. And so our political struggle for accountability cannot rely on the 'objectivity' of available images. It has to make space for ensuring accountability and justice. What may be most important right now is to not let this go. And so the question becomes what kinds of reflective commitment bind us to one another in this struggle against prevailing schemes of normative violence, including, significantly, neo-Nazi and far-right violence still on the rise in Greece. It always takes enormous amounts of collective persistence and courage, critique and creativity.

It seems to me to be worth remembering the ways in which visual evidence – namely, the video footage of Eric Garner, an unarmed black man, showing him surrounded by police and placed in a chokehold – played a significant role in galvanizing the Black Lives Matter movement and demonstrations that oppose police brutality against black people in the United States. Thousands of marchers took to the streets in anger and protested chanting Garner’s last words: ‘I can’t breathe’. Eric Garner, as we know, died from a chokehold applied by police officers while he pleaded for a breath of air eleven times. Despite the clear use of excessive force, however, a grand jury failed to indict the police officer, which also resonates with the failure to indict the white officers responsible for the racist beating of Rodney King.

In sharing my grief and sense of despair about Zak’s death with a friend earlier today, I used a phrase which in Greek implies something like how do we go on living or surviving, or, perhaps more accurately, on what conditions do we live on. My friend replied: ‘together’. Indeed, this performativity of embodied relational agency offers the possibility of politicizing the conditions of survival and what counts as life amidst ongoing loss through figuring a break with the present order(ing) of things and giving a sense of what a ‘different life’ might consist of. At least so I hope.

VK & DP: From the way you described this last encounter, but also taking into account the initial question that provoked your chain of thoughts, it seems that you propose these new forms of ‘togetherness’ as deeply queer engagements: intersectional, non-normative, constantly in flux but also demanding, constantly orientated by the relationality of embodied desire and the shattering of loss. To return to that initial question, could we define ‘New Queer Greece’ on that basis? How problematic (or enabling) do you find this term?

AA: It seems to me that every ‘new’ risks promoting a normalizing, sequential, and teleological view of temporality. So, yes, I find the term problematic but also perplexing and thus enabling. I wonder: does ‘new queer’ imply a decisive break from previous or ‘older’ enactments of queer analytics? And what about the concept ‘Greece’? How is ‘Greece’ performed in this ambivalent conceptual framework of new queerness or queer newness? Is there such a thing as ‘new queer Greece’? What logics of location and identification does this rubric mark out? What nonnormative formations and subjugated knowledges of being-in-the-world does it shift our attention to? Can there ever be such a thing as ‘queer time’ and ‘queer space’ – to recall J. Jack Halberstam?³ Along with many other people, I am interested, then, in the term’s potential to open up possibilities of queering time and space. For me, ‘new queer Greece’ registers a critical desire to displace or denaturalize ‘straight temporality’ and reproductive time lines – their hierarchies and power dynamics – from the standpoint of Greece and beyond.

As the concept of ‘queer’ travels and gets translated across transnational and transcolonial relations and non-relations, the question is what normative claims are made and unmade in its name, in different contexts. Queer is always in need of queering, and in this case, each of the terms in the title is in need of queering. I think this kind of provocation is performed in the project of this special issue. Queering ‘Greece’, in this sense, cannot be centered on Greece, but rather positions us, ex-centrally, both within and beyond the (temporal and spatial normativity of the) nation-state, and decidedly against Greek nationalism. So ‘new queer Greece’, or – perhaps more accurately for our purposes here – ‘new Greek queer’, is either antinationalist and non-homonationalist or does not exist. The critical perspectives of

queer transnationalism, queer of colour critique and queer diaspora studies have mobilized interesting analytics regarding the interstices between queerness and the politics of location and positionality. It seems to me that queerness is a critical framework through which we might productively problematize both the erasure of local/translocal/glocal specificity in Eurocentric universalist modalities of scholarship and the invocation of reified localization as an authenticated critique of colonial capitalist modernity. Queer critique is inextricably bound up with particular contexts, flows, turns, returns, relocations, and dispersals across space and time. And so I would like to situate 'new queer Greece' in such disparate and alternate topographies and temporalities, in such affective and political economies, which include queer locations and translocations, diasporas, and immigrant imaginaries.

It was through the perspective of such translocal and citational performativity that I tried, in my work on 'Women in Black' agonistic mourning in former Yugoslavia,⁴ to grapple with a modality of political activism that critically addresses the uneven conditions of grievability, in Judith Butler's terms,⁵ in the face of political loss, despite and against ethno-nationalist and heteronormative formations. I was interested in understanding the ways in which these political subjects, acting in the context of a multilayered queered, antinationalist, and antifascist feminism, troubled the established intelligibility of memorability by embodying the eventualities involved in their own and other's dissident un/belonging. I was interested in this queering going on in the very complexities and complicities of belonging.

To return to your question on new queer Greece: as you both know, various queer collectivities in Greece seek to situate their critical interventions beyond (and despite) the boundaries between academic and political engagement. What fascinates me about such critical situatedness that traverses genres and eschews binaries, is that

it enables us to trace the nuanced ways in which theory is ‘already at work in the exercise of political discourse’, as Butler puts it.⁶ In a way, this resonates with the resourceful archive of radical feminism and the autonomous feminist movement in Greece. This is the archive where my own formative moments of feminist positionality are also to be traced. One only hopes that it will be by virtue of such political collective historicities that feminist discourses emerging from ex-centrally situated, non-Eurocentric, non-US contexts, will be able to effectively counteract the #MeToo neoconservative privatization of feminism. This is, of course, one more symptom of the rightward move of organized feminist and gay politics in the U.S. during the past decade. But the varied historicities of feminist and queer encounters in different contexts pose different challenges to a critical queer feminist decolonial politics. They raise the question of feminist-queer differences and coalitions, but also the divisions and embattlements among feminists and among queer subjects, a question that emerges – although not really addressed and productively dealt with – whenever difficult and charged issues come up, such as the question of adjudicating sexual harassment complaints: what does it take to ask how to problematize the heteronormative logic that often underlies institutionalized antiharassment discourse? In my opinion, we need a space – theoretical and activist at once – where such questions can be formulated. These issues pertain to the fraught intersections of feminism, queer, and knowledge. If we take ‘queer’ as a verb, as I believe we should, we find ourselves engaging in the immanent politics of troubling inscriptions of normative intelligibility by forging creative, sustainable, and transversal interconnections for the purpose of engendering transformative and transfigured presents and futures. How to enact queer as a designation of political alliance, then,

including queer-feminist, but also queer-anticolonial, queer-left/Marxist, queer-disabled/crip and so on?

Queerness thus emerges as a performative gesture of decentring, dis-orienting and re-orienting bodies and worlds, locations, categories, identities, affiliations, affectivities, desires, and imaginaries. It is also, for me, a way of becoming in touch with the moment through which intersectional oppressions and exclusions can be effectively challenged and emancipatory resignifications can happen. Rather than instantiate a queer 'identity' then, what difference might it make to spectralize the historicity of subjectivation by means of thinking further about/through the temporal and spatial normativity of gender, sexuality, race, class, and able-bodiedness? At issue, thus, is a political and affective force of disidentification from fixed and polarizing categories of 'here' and 'there' as well as 'now' and 'then'. For me, queerness becomes a provisional and tenuous occasion for multidirectional repositioning and reimagining as a way out of the heteronormative, racialized, nationalist, capitalist organization of time. It seems to me that the point of engaging in queer scholarship is to work through and with the sense of not being at one with our actualized and actualisable present and its geopolitical histories of racialization and racialized sexuality, white nationalism, economic injustice and (neo-)colonial dispossession.

*VK & DP: 'We are spoken, we are open to linguistic harm, we are exposed to the psycholinguistic and social affect of identitarian names and yet we are not those names.'*⁷ *In your work you have consistently addressed the stronghold of identitarian reflexes, both in a context of active, contingent social resistance, but also in terms of the affect of recognition and the contradictions that must be faced at both the*

personal and political level. Are these theoretical and embodied, political challenges particularly knotted around the name 'queer'? Are they to be thought differently?

AA: Yes, in the text you mentioned, I tried to think through the possibilities of disidentification and misrecognition in gender and queer resistance. We do not own the signifiers and categorical names to which we are subjected and through which we are interpellated as subjects (i.e., 'woman'); but they do not own us either, as they are constitutively incomplete, and as we are, always already, outside ourselves. I try to think of the political possibilities of such uneasy and ambivalent belonging. What are the political possibilities of the dispossession upon which our affective being/becoming is premised? Perhaps such questions put us in a position where we can effectively think through both the struggles for recognition but also the failures of the politics of recognition. And we may have to think more about how a rights-based approach often fails to account for struggles of social justice. Thus, our critique of a politics of recognition might involve also the question whether there can be a queer politics and affectivity of recognition. I think it is important to reconceive and work through the rubric of queer recognition as a mode of queering recognition, its injuries and innovations.

Perhaps the historical present requires ways of perceiving political temporality beyond 'cruel optimism',⁸ but also beyond cruel nihilism – namely, the idea that just because all transformations oriented toward social inclusion (including liberal legal reforms in the realm of the politics of recognition) are susceptible to being turned into sites of cooptation, they are merely weapons of the state and the status quo, and thus irrelevant, unnecessary, and even dangerous. The question is how to develop and enact alternative ways, affects, and genres of living in the present without letting normative

fantasies and attachments become the horizon of our political desires. Perhaps what we need to work through right now is alternative political, ethical and affective structures of temporality and ‘im/possibility’, beyond the inherited orthodoxies of both presentism and futurism. Incidentally, this is something I’m currently struggling with: utopia, affect, inappropriate/d humanities, and the critical methodology of the not-yet. And perhaps this would interestingly speak to what you, Dimitri, have so aptly called ‘archive trouble’.⁹

VK & DP: To bring to the table another designation of the term ‘humanities’, could you say more about how you deploy the term ‘queer’ in your pedagogical practice?

AA: I would like to think, along with students and colleagues, both within and beyond the institutional machine of the university, and definitely beyond and despite the university’s narcissistic monopoly on the production of knowledge, about how we might reimagine and recraft, again and again, queer scholarship that could account at once for subjugated knowledges of economic precarity, migrant and refugee displacement, nationalist violence, transgender embodiment, racialized dispossession, and those modes of dispensability and inappropriate/d subjectivation that remain unaccountable and uncapturable by our available appellations and identificatory apparatuses.

And so we might do well to consider questions such as: How does queerness matter in our critical pedagogical practices? How does it matter in our allied work? How is it mobilized as an embodied, affective, imaginative performative instance of teaching and (un)learning against the grain of white bourgeois heteronormative power-knowledge? What is most interesting is to figure out how to deploy queer as a

way to trouble normalizing and oppressive universalities within the university and beyond. And how to do so in the midst of far-right anti-intellectualism and neoliberal attacks on public education, critical theory and the university. In the era of the corporate university, I think it has its own significance that universities are still public in Greece and don't rely on tuition and private funding.

Such questions resonate with Patricia Hill Collins's work on critical public pedagogy in reference with black feminism as a project of social justice.¹⁰ The matter of queer pedagogies and, more specifically, the question of what might be queer in pedagogical practices point, for me, to the ongoing need to expand and multiply the sites in which queer studies takes place. This is something that Halberstam has also discussed in terms of unsettling the boundaries between theory, activism, the campus, and the communities.¹¹ And this is partly why I'm moved that some of the scholars who contribute to this special issue are my students and colleagues from/with whom I've been learning and unlearning so much and in so many remarkable ways all along, and specifically on the conditions of critical possibility beyond and despite the cruel imperatives of the global marketplace and the precarization of jobs. My sense is that attending to the affectivity and performativity of intellectual solidarity and friendship plays an important role in the ways in which we are moved toward and by our critical epistemologies.

In this sense, despite its limits and problematic aspects, queer remains an important epistemological and political concern for me as a transdisciplinary and transversal critique of the conditions of time and space that render certain livelihoods impossible, and, at the same time, as a performative exploration of (im)possibilities of world-making. But although queer carries with it a potentially subversive promise, I don't believe there is anything inherently radical or subversive about 'queer studies'.

We should ask, again and again, following Eng, Halberstam and Muñoz:¹² “what’s queer about queer studies now”?

The queer/ing that I find enabling is a post-foundational political concept and embodied pedagogy that refuses assimilation and offers the possibility of figuring an immanent critique of the present. Judith Butler’s idea of ‘critically queer’ offers such a way to trouble the liberal subjective formation of ‘sexual identities’.¹³

VK & DP: As you do now, you have often made reference in your work to a ‘(post)-queer framework’, while stressing the ‘very undefinability and productive indeterminacy signalled by the term “queer” ...[that] lends itself not only to a critique of heteronormative presumptions but also to opening the stage for theorising unfinished, unfinishable and reanimated temporal proprieties as well as their future possibilities’.¹⁴ Yet one feels the temptations to ask: where do you stand on the matter of definition? Are there specific moments and/or spaces of contestation and resistance that require strategic definition, or is that a trap of interpellation per se?

AA: Well, I think that we will be asking this question for some time to come. The dialectical suspension between contestation and interpellation in the realm of defining, naming, and labeling cannot and should not be assumed in advance or answered away by means of programmatic ‘definitions’. How could anyone be sure? In any case, what interests me about the term queer is precisely the indefinability and indeterminacy that marks its critical genealogies –their incalculable potentialities and misfires.

I would suggest that we learn from the queer performativity of putting histories of violence and derogatory interpellation to non-normative use. I think it is

important to invoke, again and again, what has enabled derogatory significations of oddness, strangeness, and dehumanized out-of-placeness to be used to violate and abject non-heteronormative desires and lives, but also what motivates on occasions these abjected people, collectively, to question and take back these injurious terms and re-appropriate them against regimes of violation and dehumanization. So how to remain open to what it means for (our) bodies to be situated in –and moved by– such performative acts in (and over) space and time? How to acknowledge and theorize these moments of despair as they become events of radical possibility? It is important to use the term precisely to acknowledge the political performativity of making the effects and affects of despair work in another form. In disrupting and disorientating the normative powers of naming and defining, queerness becomes a springboard for reanimating unfinished and unfinishable temporalities and for opening up new interrelations and ‘orientations’ – sexual or otherwise.

So, for me the point can be made quite simply, albeit very schematically: there are by all means moments and spaces of contestation that require ‘definitions’ and we must undertake this task and take on this responsibility, even though – or precisely because – such definition might end up working as a trap of interpellation. I think we should always take into account, in our (re-)theorizing and (re-)politicizing, that definitions allow power to work through discursive formations, and, as such, they lay claim on us. At the same time, however, definitions are subject to reiteration, redirection, and change. They are not simply given but rather are actively produced, expropriated, deconstructed, performatively reclaimed, enacted and mobilized. Instead of producing fixed and familiar meanings, then, thinking with concepts and definitions might be a way to rethink such concepts and definitions and thus counter, even provisionally, the authority of discourse and the pervasive powers of

interpellation. This is why it is always important, I think, to work with what exceeds available definitions.

To take this point a little further: if taken as a deconstructive project, queerness is not about evading the pressing needs of actuality (as is the habitual accusation of political impracticality) including those of offering what you call 'strategic definitions' even as necessary errors. And it is definitely not about evading or disparaging the need and the duty of taking a stance. Taking a stance takes place as a performative way of inhabiting and acting in the world. It may involve making turns, wandering off, going astray in unwieldy directions, and deviating from assigned lines of demarcation, even, hopefully, taking apart the apparatuses that generate injurious and exclusionary lines. In many respects, taking a stance and engaging with the present may (or should I say *must*?) involve a poetics of the aporetic. Thus, any sense of critical (and self-critical) agency against regulatory designations and exclusionary identity categories involves a struggle against being totalised by proper names saturated with differential operations of power, and against being complicit in the interpellations they harbour. In short, to queer definitions is also to offer definitions as well as to open up how definitions come to matter. To queer definitions is also to relate to the indefinability yet to come.

VK & DP: Recent queer criticism has focused on two issues that seem to stand on opposite sides of the queer political spectrum. On the one hand, an insurgence of homophobia and racist legislation in many parts of the world (a new 'global homophobia' often connected to geopolitical changes and neo-nationalist rhetoric and agendas); and on the other, the exploitation of GLBTQI demands in order to strengthen neoliberal and/or neo-colonial agendas through a politics of what Jasbir

Puar and others have termed 'homonationalism' and 'pinkwashing'.¹⁵ How intertwined are these two tendencies, the neohomophobic and the homonationalist? Can we see similar traits in Greece?

AA: Your wonderful question makes me think of how to bring work on queer theory, the liberal state, discourses of sexuality, and biopolitics to bear on our understanding of neoliberal and neo-colonial agendas. A challenge inherent in this task is how to not assimilate queer into normative kinship structures, the nation, property ownership, racialized capital, and settler colonialism.

Jasbir Puar has convincingly argued that pinkwashing is a normative mechanism that does not only regulate queerness, but also works to rehabilitate the biopolitical matrices that define able-bodied, masculine, reproductive, virile, homonational citizenship. I would add that the accusation that criticism of Israel and its politics of occupation and dispossession entails anti-Semitism is a crucial component of the very mechanisms of pinkwashing and homonationalism.

Homonationalism denotes the biopolitical management of queerness through the tenuous incorporation of certain queer subjects into the agendas and ideologies of imperialism, militarism, and the reproductive nation-state. For me, it offers a conceptual frame for grasping the complexities of complicity. But again, we need, I think, to move beyond a clear-cut and reified opposition between 'complicity' and 'resistance'. Instead of the structural registers of interiority/exteriority vis-à-vis the exigencies of power relations, I would like to think my way through modalities of movement and engagement that cross through the established paradigms of the political and their universal claims to truth.

Besides her influential work on Israeli homonationalism, Puar's analysis in her recent book *The Right to Maim* is equally insightful.¹⁶ she interrogates Israel's policies toward Palestine by outlining how Israel brings Palestinians into a biopolitical state by rendering them available for injury and by enabling the mass debilitation of Palestinian racialized bodies. Puar argues that the production of debilitation and disability is a biopolitical process not reducible to either the pair of 'make die/let live' under the sovereign or the pair of 'let die/make live' under biopolitics. As a biopolitical register, 'the right to maim' denotes the production of precarious populations. I think this valuable modification of the Foucauldian schema through an examination of how global racialization works to debilitate can be productively deployed, in the context of critical intersectionality and assemblage theory, and in the service of articulations of present and future resistance to the effects of political dispossession and humanitarian militarism.

Homonationalism was first coined by Puar in order to address the US 'war against terrorism' and Israel's self-proclaimed representation as a gay-friendly state. For me, it is both a field of power and a conceptual frame that implies the complicity of queerness in certain geopolitical and transnational paradigms of human rights, bourgeois consumerism, and regimes of racial politics. But what happens when this frame is transposed onto other locations? I think an analytics of such transposition and of various homonationalisms requires taking into account not only differing geopolitical formations but also differing epistemic configurations. Your question about Greek homonationalism makes us think of the affective linkages between sexuality and nationalism. This brings to mind the slogan 'We are queer. We are proudly the shame of the nation' put forward by the Athenian queer group QV (Queericulum Vitae), in response to neo-Nazi Golden Dawn demonstrations against

the staging of Terence McNally's play *Corpus Christi* at the Chytrion Theatre in Athens, in October 2012, amidst austerity policies and various responses to them, including nationalist ones. This and other queer collectivities (such as AMOQA, Kiouries, Greek Transgender Support Association, Rainbow Families, and others) engage in a struggle against racialized gendered violence and have addressed neoliberal politics as a national and sexual project by mobilizing antinationalism, antifascism and a critique of homonormalization. The discursive and activist tactics of these collectivities differ from those deployed by the identity-oriented LGBT discourses, with their focus on liberal gay rights and the same-sex marriage agenda. For my part, this is by no means to disregard the right to homosexual marriage (at least insofar as the institution of marriage still exists as a form of legal recognition and protection), but rather to critically question how the abolition of a discrimination may slip into an act of normalization.

In order to understand how queerness and racialization are intertwined, we need to take into account the role of the production, regulation and normativisation of desire in the operations of nation building. National citizenship, in its racial-sexual historicity, is 'bodied' as a condition of idealized and exclusive intimacy sustained by biopolitical practices of population regulation and assimilability. The control of women's bodies becomes the vehicle through which the reproduction of the gendered and racialized nation is made possible.

Consider how neoliberal governance through debt and austerity interlocks with racializing securitization and militarism in processes of white nation making in present-day Europe. Consider also the dynamics of the normativisation of gender and sexuality in relation to national bordering. Multi-sited and translocal accounts of queer migration politics and LGBTI refugees have offered important insights with

respect to the ways in which national processes of belonging and subjectivation emerge not only as bordered spaces but also as spaces of dissensus.¹⁷ For my part, the coalitional politics emerging across queer, migrant, refugee, and racial justice movements offers unique possibilities for remaking the world in our historical present. In my opinion, an important self-reflexive question for critical queer theorizing is how to address and counteract the epistemological occlusion of the differential positionalities of queers of color, trans people of color, migrant women and migrant queers.

So it is through this critical and reflexive figure of positionality and self-positionality vis-à-vis the dynamic complexity of power that I understand and engage the term ‘homonationalism’. I wouldn’t take the invocation of this critical term as a call to occult the persistent ways in which the nation is heteronormative but rather as a discursive register through which to reflect how ‘gay-friendliness’ can become an instrumental component in the articulation of ‘proper’ national citizenship. I think the task here is to reflect on what it is that constitutes the very impulse to mainstream queer and how to mobilize the critical capacity of queer politics in multivalent ways that enable the restless re-theorizing and re-politicizing of the crosscutting registers of race, class, gender, sexuality, nationalism, and imperialism. This requires attending to what slips between the lines in queer constellations of other places, subjects, objects, and times. And it is about the passionate possibility of lived experiences, lines of allegiance, and critical epistemologies to rework the very conditions by which our historical present is marked in contexts of duress, grief, but also relationality and desire. I take this possibility to be interminably complicated, but also politically exhilarating.

¹ On this incident, see also the editors' introduction, this issue.

² 'For Zak: The Responsibility for Our Grief', <https://nomadicuniversality.com/2018/09/29/for-zak-the-responsibility-for-our-grief/> [Date accessed: 15 October 2018]

³ Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, New York: New York University Press, 2005.

⁴ Athena Athanasiou, *Agonistic Mourning: Political Dissidence and the Women in Black*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

⁵ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence* (London and New York: Verso, 2004) and *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London and New York: Verso, 2010).

⁶ Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), p. 40.

⁷ Athanasiou, "'Who' Is that Name? Subjects of Gender and Queer Resistance, or the Desire to Contest", *European Journal of English Studies* 16: 3 (2012), 199-213, 200.

⁸ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011.

⁹ Dimitris Papanikolaou, 'Archive Trouble, 2017', in Kateryna Botanova, Christos Chryssopoulos and Jurriaan Cooman (eds), *Culturescapes: Archaeology of the Future* (Basel: Christoph Merian Verlag, 2017), pp. 38-52.

¹⁰ See, for instance, Patricia Hill Collins, *On Intellectual Activism*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013.

¹¹ Judith Halberstam, "Reflections on queer studies and queer pedagogy", *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 45, issue 2-4, pp. 361-364, 2003.

¹² See David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban E. Muñoz (eds), *What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?*, Special Issue of *Social Text* 84-85, 2005.

¹³ See Butler, 'Critically Queer', *GLQ* 1: 1, 1993, 17-32.

¹⁴ Athanasiou, "'Who' Is that Name?", 208.

¹⁵ See, for instance, Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007; Sarah Schulman, 'Israel and "Pinkwashing"', *The New York Times*, 22 November 2011.

¹⁶ Puar, *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017.

¹⁷ On this concept as an underpinning and shared space of radical reorientation and redistribution of the 'normal' and the 'sensible', or politically legible, see also Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, ed. and trans. Stephen Corcoran, London and New York: Continuum, 2010.