

PAOLA BACCHETTA

# **Murderous Conditions and LTQ+ POC Decolonial, Anti- Capitalist and Anti-Misogyny *Life* Imaginings in France**

**AS I SIT** down in the winter of 2017 to write this essay on murderous conditions and the *life* imaginings of lesbian, trans, queer, and other genderly and sexual subjects of color (hereafter LQT+ POC)<sup>1</sup> for our times, I am haunted by the very recent, sudden deaths of two dear lesbian of color family-friends within a matter of weeks, each on a different continent.<sup>2</sup> The conditions of their lives, their creative interventions, are difficult to divorce from how I conceptualize this historical moment in which the rest of us (continue to) live and from how we might imagine life otherwise. Monica Hand, a childhood friend, was the first to pass on to the ancestors following a sudden and totally unexpected massive heart attack. An African-American woman who had lived primarily on the east coast of the USA, Monica was a brilliant poet, former actor in the group Rites of Women, member of the group Dyketactics and Alexandria Books collective in Philadelphia, and an activist in lesbian, feminist and anti-racist movements including anti-racist police brutality throughout her entire adult life. In the most recent period, Monica was active with Cave Canem and Black Lives Matter. Her first book of poetry, *me and Nina* (2012), connects her directly to France through

the renowned singer, songwriter, pianist, and civil rights activist Nina Simone (1933–2003) who lived in Paris during a substantial part of her adult life and left her mark there. The next to pass – through an agentic-calculated suicide – was Dalila Kadri, one of the first friends of my very early adulthood. Dalila, was French, of Algerian origin, and lived in Paris for most of her adult life before moving to Marseille. Dalila was a filmmaker and author-producer of the first film in France about lesbians of color, *Lucioles [Fireflies]* (2004). She was also a poet and an essayist. She was a longtime activist in feminist, lesbian, and anti-racism struggles. Dalila was part of the early Maison des femmes de Paris and the Archives Lesbiennes de Paris. The process of mourning Monica Hand and Dalila Kadri, whose lives ended all too soon under the murderous conditions of our times, is deeply intimate and personal. It is also collective. It is especially extremely political. Many lesbians of color in the USA, especially Black, indigenous, undocumented Mexican, and Muslim lesbians, live with racialized and colonial stress that would have already decimated other populations. In addition, many lesbians of color in France, especially those who do not pass for cisgender and straight, live in racialized and colonial societal, economic, cultural, and familial conditions that are not even visible to the bulk of subjects who do not have to face them. While these two deaths across different continents were political, so are and will be their modes of memorialization. This essay then takes shape in an interval, wherein we can recognize both bereavement for and celebration of their lives. The very topic addressed here constitutes a move toward recognizing and honoring their creativity and everything they gave to those of us who remain behind. May we make excellent use of the wisdom that their lives, expressions, and creations have passed on to us all.

In that spirit and under the heading *We're Here*, I briefly address some deadly, interrelated problems that we – LTQ+ POC subjects and, ultimately, all subjects – are collectively facing at the present time in France, and often in other parts of Europe as well. I also engage with some of the ways that LTQ+ POC are acting against and beyond this situation of entrapment.

First, we are (all) caught in brutal and ever degrading economic, social, political, psychic and symbolic conditions. They are produced through a whole array of *multiplicities* of relations of power and their constituent components: colonialism and coloniality, global capitalism at all its scales of operability including in its current corporate-military industrial and corporate-fascist manifestations, systemic and transnational race-racialization-racism, regimes of normative, oppressive, exploitative, repressive and inegalitarian gender and sexuality, and the infinite forms of violence (physical-corporeal, material, social, economic, cultural, psychic, symbolic), destruction of non-human life and beings and the environment, that these *multiplicities* together entail (Bacchetta 2015). This configuration includes the current hegemonic epistemological fields that are produced by, developed within, and reproductive of the *multiplicities* of relations of power that characterize our times.

These conditions also risk worsening dramatically as right-wing movements and political parties are on the rise, as are complicities between neoliberal parties and right-wing discourses and policies. Their effects bear differently for disparately co-constituted and socially situated subjects. Hyper-subaltern and hyper-radical LTQ+ POC are formed and positioned in the undersides, in the vicious extremes characterized by social death, death-boundedness, premature death, fast death, and slow death (Patterson 1982; Davis 2001; JanMohamed 2005; Gilmore 2007). Moves toward elimination range from extreme economic deprivation, hateful racist and queerphobic violence, social exclusion and ridicule, microaggressive provocations of long-term hyper-stress, everyday inducement to disappear, including through suicide, but also a whole series of modes of cultural annihilation, including especially the one that Jin Haritaworn et al. (2013) call “murderous inclusion.” Nearly all LTQ+ POC in France I know will know at least one, if not many, LTQ+ POC who have not made it out alive. Premature death is an epidemic. Given the dangerous conditions in which LTQ+ POC lives unfold, we might marvel at the fact that any of us indeed survive and that some of us even manage, most often together, to thrive. This is very often

thanks to hard-fought solidarities among POC. It is also not incidental that, beyond solidarities, in many cases survival and especially thriving are situationally aided by various types of intra-POC *co-formational* privilege such as colorism, or by acquired privilege such as class or cis-genderism.

Second, in our societies, the processes of subject constitution within a same hegemonic field of intelligibility, in the sense of Louis Althusser (1995) and Michel Foucault (2001a; 2001b), means that everyone, albeit disparately, is comprised of, saturated with, and faced with societal and singular subjective limitations on perceptibility that variably block or hinder our capacity to fully analyze power and our capacity for resistance. Foucault (1977; 2001a; 2001b) insightfully maintains that power operates most effectively when it is concealed. While some aspects of power manifest as flagrant and spectacular, such as in violent police raids in the *banlieues* or working class racialized neighborhoods at the outskirts of cities in France, a great deal of the most noxious relations and actions of power are currently indiscernible, inaccurately distinguished or erroneously identified. The same power that hides itself produces the non-appearance, illegibility, or misrecognition of the most hyper-subaltern and hyper-critical LTQ+ POC subjects and their oppositional and non-oppositional resistance, in the sense of Franz Fanon (1952; 1968; 2001) and Steve Pile (1997).<sup>3</sup> Indeed, some of the most lethal relations of power and some of the most innovative and effective modalities of resistance cannot register precisely, or at all, in the hegemonic field of intelligibility because they do not correspond to, and remain outside of, the field's presuppositions, categories, and logics. They just pass beneath its radar.

Across white-dominated *national-normative* feminist, LGBTIQ, and workers' movements, and in straight-dominated, decolonial and anti-racism movements, in much of Europe today, a common reaction to attempts to bring into relief the existence and specific conditions of LTQ+ POC is an "Uh-huh"-nod, and then mumblings about how such a grouping is comprised of very small numbers, thus is not politically significant, and either *equally* shares conditions of death and life with

the rest of LGBTIQ people, or alternately of all POC, and so should get with the program or is facing such small *differences* in conditions that it is ridiculous to prioritize them. Doing so is sometimes dominantly imagined to constitute an unnecessary distraction from work on more pressing issues (presumably of either white feminist and queer subjects, or of heterosexual and cisgender subjects of color, who are imagined to be somehow more entitled to life).

In contrast, in what follows, I argue that all subjects who are concerned with *liberation-oriented* resistance have an objective political interest in paying attention to radical hyper-subaltern, hyper-critical LTQ+ POC and their activisms, creative work, and inventions of new socialities and ways of *life*. This is explicitly *not* on the grounds of calls to inclusivity, which generally revolve around neoliberal diversity recognition, containment, and management (Chow 2002; Ferguson 2012). Instead, the work of LTQ+ POC has a wider importance beyond the “for us” because it (1) intensely illuminates otherwise hidden conditions of power in the sense of Foucault, and (2) provides models for oppositional and non-oppositional *liberation-oriented* resistance and modes of *life* (see also Bacchetta 2016).

My argument draws on Arjun Appadurai’s (2006) critical approach to the analytical disdain for small numbers and Gyanendra Pandey’s (1992) notion of the “fragment,” and takes them elsewhere. Appadurai (2006) explains the negative affect toward, and will to suppress, small numbers via: Hannah Arendt’s (1973) understanding of totalitarianism and the nationalist exceptionalisms that are rooted in classical liberal notions of the nation which require social homogeneity and forms of cohesion that “minorities” are imagined to put under threat; globalization that deterritorializes, accelerates connections, provokes flows of people and threatens nationalist ideologies; and, drawing on the classic work of Mary Douglas (2002), the imperative of purification as a response to perceived threats. Pandey (1992) demonstrates how any social *fragment* can constitute a vital part of a whole without which we cannot know a full history. With these points in mind, I shift into another direction to think about how a minute and specifically *hyper-subaltern fragment* can

open up new modes of perception of relations of power in a hegemonic field of intelligibility, and can offer insights for a broader spectrum of resistance (Bacchetta 2016). To do so, I radically trim the “small numbers” that Appadurai (2006) thinks with (“minorities”), as well as that constituted by even smaller *fragment* of LTQ+ POC, to make central a *fraction* which is most often totally ignored: hyper-subaltern, radically critical lesbians of color.

Notwithstanding the *fraction's* minuteness, its archive is expansive. The materials that inform this essay include the narratives, poetry, posters, slogans, artwork, spatial productions, convergent meeting points, and creative modes of social life of collectivities and singularities of lesbians of color in France from the 1980s to the present time. As lesbians of color work very closely with non-lesbian-identified feminist and non-feminist women allies of color, they are included in this fraction. I draw additionally from my experiences as a co-founder and member of some of groups I discuss, especially: collectif féministe contre le racismisme et l'antisémitisme [Feminist collective against racism and anti-semitism]; and lesbiennes contre l'anti-semitisme, le fascisme et le racismisme [Lesbians against anti-semitism, fascism and racism]. This brief essay is also very much informed by my work with two groups of which I am currently an associate member: Lesbiennes of color (LOCs) [Lesbians of color]; and the non-lesbian, yet women of color only group collectif de la Marche des Femmes pour la Dignité (MAFED) [Collective for the Women's March for Dignity], a group of women of color against police brutality.

In what follows, I will first present a few specific contours of current conditions with which lesbians of color in France are faced. Then I will address how their activisms, creations, and inventions of socialities and ways of *life* put into relief dimensions of these conditions that pass under the radar of both the dominant social fragment and the other subaltern fragments. Finally, I will offer a few words about the kind of vital political work that broader attention to LTQ+ POC enactments and practices can do.

## Conditions

For thinking about present conditions in France, it will be helpful to briefly foray into genealogies of the present. The kind of spatialities and temporalities that characterize France today did not drop out of the sky.

In that sense, undeniably one of several major factors in the production of France, as we know it today, like many other European states and the USA, is its co-constitution as a nation from the 16<sup>th</sup> century until present through colonial relations of power. France is often said to have gone through two periods of colonialism: the first which ended in 1814, and a second which began with the colonization of Algeria in 1830 and was given a huge blow when the Algerian national liberation movement successfully won its independence in 1962. At its apex, France had colonized 11,500,000 square kilometers, implicating 2.7 million people.

However, from a decolonial perspective, and to help highlight the actual relations of power implicated, it is more interesting to periodize colonialism through the resistance enacted against it. By 1945, national liberation movements were in full force and one by one many won political independence. Algeria remains etched in the mind of the French even today because it was a heavily invested settler colony, not far from France, and its national war of liberation was extremely intense. Once defeated the French colons returned to France where they suddenly no longer had the privileges they had enjoyed at the expense of Algerians. While the French state itself, and many scholars as well, imagine France as postcolonial, in fact direct colonialism continues today with France's overseas regions and overseas departments, overseas collectivities, the *sui generis* collectivity of New Caledonia, overseas territories, all beyond the metropole, and arguably with the state's policies toward racialized working class populations of the *banlieues*.

This huge *temporal-spatiality* of French colonialism includes an array of disparate, distinct and overlapping colonial formations that range from settler to economic to administrative to military colonialism. They did and do various kinds of damage. For instance, in settler colonies *segregationality* – or multi-dimensional border and boundary production that includes but largely exceeds the spatial – is an *actor* and catalyst in

the construction of a series of unequal binaries such as: colonizing and colonized subjects, colonizing and colonized space, and superiorized and inferiorized cultures (on *segregationality*, see Bacchetta forthcoming b). Like other major colonial powers, across its different colonial formations France disrupted indigenous economies and imposed new products and kinds of labor and of unemployment. It inserted the French language, legal system, and laws into many of its colonies. It imposed French gender and sexuality norms onto the colonies. It disseminated a sense of French superiority and colonized inferiority, a relation that became formalized in state discourses, including civilizational and savior narratives.

Today, like other countries, France has its particularities in the context of what Walter Mignolo (2000) calls, more generally, *coloniality*, defined as the continuation of actual colonialism, and/or of colonialism's effects, across social, political, cultural and psychic life after political independence. I would characterize France's specific coloniality as *coloniality-in-denial*, meaning as a state of coloniality which includes the overt refusal to acknowledge the normative violence of colonialism and of its continued economic, social, cultural, juridical, and psychic effects even after political independence. Such disavowal is the norm in France. On the right it gets manifested directly, as in the law passed on February 23, 2005 mainly by the right in the French National Assembly requiring that colonialism especially in Algeria be taught in ways that puts France "in positive light." Such legislation reinforces the colonial construction of (ex)colonized peoples as uncivilized, incapable of self-rule, and requiring (white) French subjects to bring them civilization and order. *Coloniality-in-denial* also plays out in indifference toward murderous wars, the dead and the maimed, and the fate of the refugees whom these wars produce. On the (white) left, including among a critical mass of white feminists and queers, *coloniality-in-denial* translates into massive support for the March 15, 2004 law that banned the hijab or Muslim headscarf from primary and secondary educational institutions. Support for such a law can only proceed by erasing the scene wherein French soldiers – as a tactic of humiliation – forcibly unveiled women in the public space in



colonial Algeria. It also relies on the relatively uncritical internalization and thick reiteration of civilizational and savior narratives that represent colonized men as hyper-sexual and hyper-sexist, and that figure colonized women as *more-oppressed-than-thou* and in need of (white) saviors. In this framing, the current colonial biopolitical act of forced unveiling is made to seem like a state feminist act. For most of the (white) right and the (white) left, the bulk of brutal police violence in the *banlieues* is invisible. When it enters the public discursive scape spectacularly, as in current sensational media reports of the murder and rape of Black and brown men, it is attributed to individualized anormative police misconduct against a (racialized) population characterized monolithically by class. It is not read as an effect of colonial racism in *co-formation* with class, gender, and sexuality.

Right now, like other sites across the global north(s) and south(s) France is feeling the impact of advanced capitalism in crisis. Like many places in Europe, and yet not necessarily across the globe, France has a long history of mass labor movements, including immigrant labor movements, that have won many gains. They are at present being eroded and remain under threat. The crisis has also meant accelerated attempts at de-socialization and the expansion of privatization, which bear on many apparatuses of the state, including the educational apparatus with the re-organization of departments and degrees, and tuition hikes.

In the present, France is under a state of emergency that began directly following the November 2015 violent attacks in Paris and the northern *banlieue* of Saint Denis in which 130 people lost their lives and 368 were injured. Under these conditions coloniality, capitalism, race and gender, became newly combined. They re-construct and spectacularize the notion of the figure of a terrorist – male and racialized – internal-other who is hiding among the population or who is lurking at the borders and must be kept out. This situation is made to legitimize (“for the common good”) economic and social shifts from investment in social security to investment in the (in)security industrial complex. The argument is that increased threat requires expanded policing and more weapons. This apparatus is not supposed to be idle. Thus, it is unevenly

deployed against specific racialized populations that are always already suspect and targeted.

As in many other global northern sites, in France LGBTIQ subjects are interpellated in various ways into coloniality, capitalism in crisis, the (in)security state, but also into *homonationalism* defined as the contemporary period of “national homosexuality” (Puar 2007). Homonationalism draws upon models of *homonormativity* that manifest in demands that invoke LGBTIQ equal rights with heterosexuals within neoliberal states, such as gay marriage and gays in the military (Duggan 2003). Such homonormative demands are elaborated not on the basis of respect for queer difference but rather according to the logic of gay *equality-as-sameness*. Such a configuration is inadvertently hyper-racialized. For Jasbir Puar (2007), in this period of homonationalism the figure of the proper (white) homo is constructed against the figure of the (brown or Black) terrorist as other. The new “national homosexuality” of homonationalism has become yet another weapon that is instrumentalized by global northern states in foreign policy against global southern states that the former can now deem homophobic and therefore undemocratic and requiring intervention (Puar 2007).

Drawing on Puar’s many insights, and in a vital and fruitful dialogue with Jin Haritaworn, I suggest the usefulness of analytically separating two dimensions of *homonationalism* into: *homonationalism 1*, configured and deployed by the state, and *homonationalism 2* in which publics, including queers, are saturated and which some gays and lesbians reproduce (Bacchetta and Haritaworn 2011). If in an initial phase of *homonationalism 1* the state was most often represented by *presumed-to-be homo-friendly* straight officials, today some selective (white, cisgender) gay men are rising to prominence in right-wing politics as the champion speaking subjects of Islamophobic discourses. In Holland, of course, there was the (white) gay Pim Fortuyn, who proposed a total Muslim ban, thereby prefiguring the policy later adopted by Donald Trump. At this time in Britain and circulating across the USA there is the white (and bleached blond) Milo Yiannopoulos, who spouts hatred against Muslims but also mocks transgender people, Muslim and non-Muslim

Black activists, Mexicans and people of Mexican descent, feminists, and the disabled. Indeed, homonationalism lends itself well to the extension of hateful targeting.

In France, at this time there are more (white) gay men in leadership positions on the right than on the left. A (white) gay man, Florian Philippot, is now the vice president of the fascist National Front. Its chief, Marine Le Pen, the daughter of the party's first leader Jean-Marie Le Pen (from 1972 to 2011), has used Philippot to soften the image of the National Front and to make headway into (white) gay and (white) gay-friendly communities. Philippot has publicly stated that for (presumably white) gay people the question of Muslim homophobia is a priority. In 2014 the National Front appointed Sébastien Chenu, co-founder of the activist group *GayLib*, as an adviser and a potential future candidate. Notwithstanding her opposition to gay marriage, an issue that is popular among many white gay men, Marine Le Pen has one quarter of the gay vote and is fast gaining ground mainly because of her spectacular denunciations of presumed "Muslim homophobia." While most LGBTIQ subjects in France vote somewhere on the left, 38.6% of white married gay men now vote for the right despite its official anti-gay-marriage position (Feder 2017).<sup>4</sup> Here the primary identification with white supremacy is clear.

While the *white-supremacist-white-savior* trope of "Muslim homophobia" is explicitly deployed by the extreme right in France, the notion itself is shared across the political spectrum, including among significant portions of the white left. "Muslim homophobia" can only make sense inside a hegemonic field of intelligibility that relies on essentialized colonial and orientalist presuppositions, categories, and logics. In this field, the category "Muslim" is constructed first and foremost as a (presumably straight) *male* subject, in the sense of Luce Irigaray (1977), that is, as the direct negative counterpart to the idealized (presumably straight) white male global northern subject. In this configuration, "Muslim" is an agglomeration sutured with qualities of backwardness, lack of civilization, enemy of democracy, inegalitarian, and vicious persecutor of vulnerable parts of their own societies: women historically

and now additionally queers. (Presumed-to-be straight) Muslim women are figured as victims of Muslim male counterparts and/or in complicity with them, via discourses of polygamy, veiling, or terrorism. Under conditions of homonationalism, Muslims – a category comprised of 1.5 billion people, or 20% of the population of the globe and the largest minority in France at an estimated 5% to 7% of the population, and which includes a whole range of non-cisgender, non-heterosexual subjects – are represented across dominant discourses, across registers, as rather homogenously *more-queerphobic-than-thou*. In a preceding period of state feminism, idealized (white male) subjecthood was extended to women, again according to *equality-equals-sameness* and substitutionalist logics of assimilation. Today under conditions of homonationalism, idealized (white) subjecthood is expanded to include homonormative (white) male and female homosexual subjects. However, these latter positions remain fragile; homonormative homosexual subjects – which hereafter I will call simply *homo subjects* – are continually interpellated to prove their loyalty to the (white) nation. The (white) heterosexist suspicion that white queers fall under the rubric of *not-quite-us*, that is, as *not-quite-nationalnormative*, coupled with (white) homo desires to belong, to enjoy equality and even full (white) privilege, can lead some white, homo subjects to perform exaggerated displays of *more-loyal-to-whiteness-than-thou*.

In France, where Muslim hyper-queerphobia has become a “common sense” notion in the sense of Antonio Gramsci (1975), that is, accepted, circulated, posited as a given, no longer requiring proof or even explanation, any subject read as Muslim who publicly detracts from French nationalism – especially by exposing coloniality and racism – can be brutally put in their inferiorized place by invoking the series of the colonial and orientalist qualities long assigned to them. For instance, in a highly publicized episode, Houria Bouteldja, the spokesperson for the Parti des Indigènes de la République [Party of the Indigenous of the Republic], France’s decolonial political party, was spectacularly and erroneously accused of hyper-queerphobia at a time when a crowd of 100,000 mainly white people, led by the (white) comedian Frigide Bar-

jot, filled the streets of Paris to protest gay marriage and gay adoption, which for a critical mass of protesters was extended to condemning gay existence outside (and sometimes inside) the closet. All the while Barjot maintained that she herself is not homophobic and that she parties in clubs with “gay friends.” More recently, Amal Bentounsi, the founder and spokesperson for Urgence notre police tue [Emergency: Our Police Kills], an activist group comprised of families of victims of police murders in the *banlieues*, was also accused of being hyper-queerphobic at a time when the group’s work had become very public and was forging many kinds of alliances.

### **Situated Readings: Notes from the Fraction**

In France, as in many other places in Europe, radically critical LTQ+ POC and nearly all the modes of resistance and expression that they produce, are deeply over-shadowed by the public spectacle of presumed POC hyper-queerphobia. Yet if one considers the relationality of LTQ+ POC to the *multiplicities* of relations of power in which all subjects are produced and saturated, and the fact that they do not have the luxury of ignoring any, a different and more expansive field of perception may begin to unfold.

First, issues that currently appear to be monolithic in dominant perception, very often show up as much more dense, complex and multi-dimensional for radically critical lesbian of color activists than for others. Thus, in the dominant leftist perception the current influx of refugees constitutes a “refugee crisis” and a “humanitarian crisis.” For some, it is provoked by unjust war, for others by an excess of the economic inequalities inherent to capitalism. The refugee subject is generally understood as neutral, and thus, in the sense of Irigaray (1977), neutral.

However, for radically critical lesbians of color whose roots and/or recent presents are directly entwined in colonies and postcolonies, it is not possible to erase the place of *coloniality* in the production of war and economic disaster. As women and lesbian subjects positioned on the subaltern side of dominant gender and sexuality binaries, they will not have the comfort of imagining refugee subjects to be gender and sexu-

ally neutral. They are more likely to presume or to integrate a critique of the colonial construction of colonized men, women, children, and an array of queer subjects, including the relations of power that separate them, into their analytics, even if not formulated as such. Finally, while often the most subaltern subjects among refugee collectivities are actually outside dominant perception, radically critical lesbian of color activists may focus their efforts on them.

This is what the group *Lesbiennes of color*, based in Paris and its *banlieues*, has been doing. From the beginning of the current massive refugee influx into France, they have organized coalitional demonstrations with immigrant organizations and human rights groups against war, colonialism, and racism, and to demand that France open its borders more widely to all refugees. They have also been working directly with lesbian and single women refugees who are either made indistinguishable or, when noted, become objects of savior presumptions and practices. Some straight, white feminists and lesbians provide important services for refugee women and lesbians. However, the work of radically critical lesbians of color differs in that they do not idealize “refuge” in France as “safety.” Instead, they offer material means to *self*-help along with an analysis of racism and concrete solidarity against it.

In sum, to pay attention to the actions of lesbians of color is to rethink the situation of refugees, not as a “refugee crisis” but rather as a deadly crisis-effect of colonialism, capitalism, Islamophobia, racism, gender and sexual relations of power, and war. To put into relief the plethora of dimensions, and *multiplicities* of relations of power that are operative, may be dominantly thought to unnecessarily complicate things, indeed to create an unmanageable mess. However, highlighting the many kinds and dimensions of power at work has many political uses. It allows for the formulation of more effective strategy. It can also help to uncover many possible links across issues and by extension potentialities for highly effective coalitional work on them all. This is especially so when the *multiplicities* of relations of power are not read reductively as merely *cumulative* (coloniality plus capitalism plus war plus gender plus x), but rather are understood as *co-formational*, that is, as

constituent parts of each other in a myriad of configurations, and as inseparably productive of oppression, exploitation, inequality, repression, and farther, as co-constitutive of subjects, objects, events and conduct (Bacchetta 2009; 2015; forthcoming a).

At this time there is an interesting (re)beginning of meaningful conversations across racialized positionalities among LTQ+ POC and allies in France. On March 18, 2017, a day long Queer of Color Town Hall became an integral part of the annual (mainly white) Queer Week celebration. In the summer of 2017 a new, racially mixed queer group was formed in the wake of the election of the neoliberal Emmanuel Macron as head of state, and has been agitating forcefully around the issue of migrants and refugees. The group calls itself Claq: collectif queer, trans, pédé, bi, gouines [Claq: Queer, trans, faggot, bi, dykes collective]. NB, phonetically “claq” rings as “claque,” meaning “slap,” “punch” or “smack.” The second part of the name translates as collective of queers, trans, faggots, bis and dykes, thereby distinguishing its objectives from the neoliberal and homonationalist respectability orientations of many white French LGBTIQ groups). Claq’s first action was to disrupt the party of newly elected head of state Emmanuel Macron’s party in the June 24, 2017 Gay Pride March in Paris. Later, on July 19, Claq members hung a 15 meter long banner across the Pont des Arts in the middle of Paris, near the Louvre with the Eiffel Tower in the background, reading: “Macron starves the migrants: Queers against borders.” In a press release related to the action Claq members critiqued the French government’s hypocritical discourse and policies regarding migrants and refugees, and declared: “We cannot rest until everyone has been liberated from a global oppression.”<sup>5</sup> Such solidarity is in continuity with 1980s’ anti-racism and anti-colonial activisms, including by radical racially and ethnically mixed groups such as collectif féministe contre le racism et l’anti-semitisme and collectif lesbien contre l’anti-semitisme, le facisme et le racisme, mentioned above, even if historical memory of such earlier groups has been erased (Bacchetta 2016). Emerging in full force now, and responding to the specific configurations of coloniality and racism at present, such groups as Claq, even if few and far between across Eu-

rope, remind us that exciting potentialities for solidarity across radically critical, racialized, genderly and sexually subaltern positionalities, and with a whole range of allies, against coloniality, racism, Islamophobia, capitalism and misogyny, for total liberation, can be created in our times.

Second, all of this can be pushed much farther. To understand the analyses and imaginings that inform the activisms, enactments and practices, both political and social, of radically critical lesbians (and trans and other queers) of color is to open up yet other future *liberation-oriented* ways of thinking, sensing, constructing socialities, producing action and creative expressions and inscriptions, and ways of re-imagining the (dis)organization of human and non-human planetary *life*. Lesbian of color squats are a case in point. They have often been born of economic urgencies for housing, yet they entail an anti-capitalist transformation of otherwise privatized property into collective public space. What can happen within such spaces is equally productive politically. In living together, in sharing day-to-day necessities, constructive interdependencies that defy neoliberal individualization can be induced. In the small gestures of cooking together, in the many acts of loving kindness that unfold, a new way of organizing collective human life can get created. This does not mean that such spaces are islands beyond the *multiplicities* of relations of power that surround them; the subjects, by their very *co-formation*, and the space itself, are fully saturated in them. However, they differ from other spaces, including other squats, in that the simultaneity of coloniality, capitalism, misogyny, racism, Islamophobia, gender and sexuality, and other relations of power, are already on their radar, out in the open, exposed, and thus available for critique. The squat space is inside these relations of power and yet provides some rest from some of their harmful effects. Such spaces are also not without conflict; however, they are equally not without inventions of different, less harsh modes of addressing and overcoming conflict.

It may be wise to think of lesbian of color squats outside the dominant left conceptualization of squats *counter-publics*. The squats in question are not primarily oppositional (counter) but rather they are politically elsewhere from the binary in which oppositionality is caught. Nor can



they be reduced to the ostensibly separate, alternative economies and socialities they invent. Instead we can usefully read such lesbian of color squats as somewhat autonomous *subalternative commons* wherein new ways of *life* are imagined and enacted.

### Concluding Remarks

In sum, it should be clear that I am *not* making an essentialist claim about lesbians of color in France (or elsewhere) as always-already radically critical magical subjects with inherently special insights. On the contrary, my argument requires that we understand all subjects not as givens but rather as *co-formational subject-effects* that are constructed in *multiplicities* of relations of power. No subject is eternally positioned in one stable place inside the social fabric, instead subjects are situated as always potentially shifting *subject-positionalities* in the sense of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1999). In any context of relations of power, in any temporal-spatiality, subjects are not locked into fixed relations either. Instead, they come to occupy (and to leave) shifting places in an always potentially unstable *continuum of subaltern-to-dominant* subjects and subject-positionalities (Laclau and Mouffe 1999).<sup>6</sup>

With that in mind, radically critical lesbians of color, who *at this time* are co-constituted, saturated with and forced to live with and confront on a daily basis *multiplicities* of relations of power, which are often *in-your-face*, blatant, with very explicit and direct consequences, can be understood as a potentially fruitful hyper-subaltern subjectivities and subject-positionalities for vastly expansive, situated, hyper-critical readings of *co-formations* of power that are operative and yet that may remain concealed or be dismissed in *relatively dominant* critical perception. The *extensiveness* of the *multiplicities* of power that radically critical lesbians of color cannot avoid, dodge, take leave of, or escape from, is in direct contrast to the ostensible insignificance of our numbers. We are told that we are few. It is then understood that our lives, what we produce and create, even our deaths, do not matter. Monica Hand and Dalila Kadri can be made to disappear. Their resistance, our resistance, can be reduced to mere personal sociality and read as political failure.

Yet, and this is a warning: Monica Hand, Dalila Kadri, the group Lesbiennes of color, and a whole range of other lesbian of color groups and singularities, each in their own way, are canaries in the mines, singing about what just may lurk on the horizon for the mass of critical and uncritical others. So, to begin with, it may be good for those very near, and for those very far away, to learn to perceive, and to make sense of, the many kinds of concerts of birds.

**PAOLA BACCHETTA** is a Professor and the Vice Chair of Pedagogy in the Department of Gender and Women's Studies at University of California, Berkeley. Her books include *Co-Motion: Situated Planetarities, Co-Formations and Co-Productions in Feminist and Queer Alliances* (Duke University Press, forthcoming), *Femminismi Queer Postcoloniali: Critiche transnazionali all'omofobia, all'islamofobia e all'omonazionalismo*, contributing co-editor with Laura Fantone (Ombre Corte 2015), *Gender in the Hindu Nation: RSS Women as Ideologues* (Women Ink 2004), *Right-Wing Women: From Conservatives to Extremists around the World*, contributing co-editor with Margaret Power (Routledge 2002), *Textes du Mouvement Lesbien en France, 1970–2000*, co-editor with Claudie Lesselier (DVD, self-published 2011), and *Global Racialities: Empire, Decoloniality and Post-Coloniality*, co-edited with Sunaina Maira (Routledge, forthcoming). Professor Bacchetta has published about fifty academic journal articles and book chapters in many languages, on questions of genderly and sexually subaltern subjects transnationally; co-formations and co-productions of power (decoloniality, anti-capitalism, misogyny, Islamophobia, racism); political resistance, political creative invention and alliances (by social movements, artists and intellectuals); and gender and sexuality in global political conflict. Her geographic areas of specialization are France, India and the USA.

## REFERENCES

- Althusser, Louis. 1995. "Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'état" [1970]. In Louis Althusser, *Sur la Reproduction*, 269–314. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Appadurai, Arjun. 2006. *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Arendt, Hanna. 1973. *The Origins of Totalitarianism* [1951]. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovic.
- Bacchetta, Paola. 2009. "Co-Formations: Des spatialités de résistance chez les Lesbien-nes 'of color' en France." *Genre, Sexualité et Société* 11:1. <http://gss.revues.org>.
- . 2015. "Décoloniser le Féminisme: Intersectionnalité, assemblages, co-formations, co-productions." *Cahiers du CEDREF* 20. Special Issue: Intersectionnalité et colonialité. <https://cedref.revues.org/833>.
- . 2016. "QTPOC Critiques of 'Post-Raciality,' Segregationality, Coloniality and Capitalism in France." In *Decolonizing Sexuality*, edited by Sandeep Bakshi, Suhraiya Jivraj and Silvia Posocco, 264–81. London: Counterpress.
- . Forthcoming a. *Co-Motion: Situated Planetarities, Co-Formations and Co-Productions in Feminist and Queer Alliances*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- . Forthcoming b. "Segregationality." Bacchetta's chapter in manuscript collectively authored by Fatima El-Tayeb and Jin Haritaworn. Based on talk, "Segregationality and the Politics of QTPOC Subaltern Spatialities in France." Sexualities Conference, American Association of Geographers. San Francisco, March 28, 2016.
- Bacchetta, Paola, and Jin Haritaworn. 2011. "There Are Many Transatlantics: Homonationalism, Homotransnationalism and Feminist-Queer-Trans of Colour Theories and Practices." In *Transatlantic Conversations: Feminism as Travelling Theory*, edited by Kathy Davis and Mary Evans, 127–44. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Chow, Rey. 2002. *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Davis, Angela. 2001. *The Prison Industrial Complex*. Chico: AK.
- Douglas, Mary. 2002. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New York: Routledge.
- Duggan, Lisa. 2003. *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy*. Boston: Beacon.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1952. *Peau noire, masques blanches*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
- . 1968. *Les damnés de la terre*. Paris: Maspero.
- . 2001. *L'an V de la révolution algérienne*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Feder, J. Lester. 2017. "How France's Nationalist Party Is Winning Gay Support." *Buzzfeed News*, February 2. [https://www.buzzfeed.com/lesterfeder/frances-nationalist-party-is-winning-gay-support?utm\\_term=.dpoPoWz86#.osx1mBrpv](https://www.buzzfeed.com/lesterfeder/frances-nationalist-party-is-winning-gay-support?utm_term=.dpoPoWz86#.osx1mBrpv).

- Ferguson, Roderick. 2012. *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 2001a. “Le sujet et le pouvoir” [1982]. In Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits, Vol. I. 1974–1975*, 1041–62. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 2001b. “Le pouvoir, une bête magnifique.” In Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits, Vol. II. 1976–1988*, 368–82. Paris: Gallimard.
- Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. 2007. *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gramsci, Antonio. 1975. *Quaderni del carcere*, edited by V. Gerratana. Turin: Einaudi.
- Haritaworn, Jin, Adi Kuntsman, and Silvia Posocco. 2013. “Introduction: Murderous Inclusions.” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 15:4:445–52.
- Irigaray, Luce. 1977. *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.
- JanMohamed, Abdul. R. 2005. *The Death-Bound-Subject: Richard Wright's Archeology of Death*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Laclau, Ernesto, and Chantal Mouffe. 1999. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso.
- Lestrade, Didier. 2012. *Pourquoi les gays sont passés à droite*. Paris: Seuil.
- Mignolo, Walter. 2000. *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Pandey, Gyanendra. 1992. “In Defense of the Fragment: Writing about Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today.” *Representations* 37:27–55.
- Patterson, Orlando. 1982. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Pile, Steve. 1997. “Introduction: Opposition, Political Identities and Spaces of Resistance.” In *Geographies of Resistance*, edited by Steve Pile and Michael Keith, 1–32. New York: Routledge.
- Puar, Jasbir. 2007. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham: Duke University Press.

## NOTES

1. The alphabetical nominations QPOC (Queer People Of Color) or QTPOC (Queer Trans People Of Color) are today, in the anglophone global north, widely accepted to designate pluralities of subjects of color deemed anormative in heterosexual and cisgender contexts. Yet, they have a common problem, which we might think about variably as their pre-feminism, indifference to feminism or disregard for feminism. In many cases, the effect is the erasure of misogyny and the sexist organization of power, and with it, a whole range of hyper-subaltern subjects, that is, lesbians (who may be cis or non-cis, trans or non-trans, or other). The primary empirical focus of

this essay, the resistance and creative productions of lesbians of color, ensures that we bring into relief a gamut of *multiplicities* of relations of power. My inscription here of the L in LTQ+ POC is a gesture toward un-erasing the subjects and the *multiplicities* of relations of power in which they are co-formed, immersed, forced to live, including under erasure. Unfortunately, given the plethora of identificatory situations and terms, and the many of kinds of silence around identities, in every designation there are yet other absences, and this is the case here too. In this text the term queer and the +, albeit grossly inadequate, are meant as a provisional mode to recognize the existence of all the unnamed, such as intersexed, bisexual, asexual or pansexual, etc. The term LTQ+ POC specifically also recognizes the limitations of LGBTIQ as a designation which does not name a whole array of racialized genderly and sexually anormative subjects, such as Two Spirit peoples or Hijiras, and as a term which is at the present time all too often inscribed in neoliberal and homonationalist discourses and practices.

2. I am grateful to the members of our UCHRI (University of California Humanities Research Institute) winter 2017 research residency group on “QTPOC and Space in Europe” for polylogue that has nourished this and some of my forthcoming work: Fatima El-Tayeb, Joao Gabriel, Jin Haritaworn, Jillian Hernandez, SA Smythe, Vanessa Thompson, and Tiffany Willoughby-Herard. Regarding this essay, I am particularly indebted to Haritaworn for pushing me to think more about small numbers and dismissal. None of the UCHRI community should be held responsible for any problems with my analysis. Many thanks to the UCHRI for providing the space-time to think, read and write.
3. See especially Pile’s (1997) spatialized reading of Fanon.
4. To get an idea about the trend in recent history, see Didier Lestrade (2012).
5. <http://claq.over-blog.com/>.
6. See also the re-reading of Gramsci on subalterns and subalterneities in Bacchetta (forthcoming a).