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DECOLONIZING SEXUALITIES

TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

CRITICAL INTERVENTIONS

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*to all
intersectional/insurrectional
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living and silenced
we stand together
in love*

QTPOC Critiques of 'Post-Raciality,' Segregationality, Coloniality and Capitalism in France

Paola Bacchetta

This essay turns our attention to radical analytics and practices from France that have been rather systematically ignored in their site of production, and that are totally unknown beyond it, that is: Queer and Trans People of Colour (QTPOC) critiques of power today. My point is not to make an additive intervention by recovering invisibilized QTPOC theorizations. Instead I suggest that a focus on how these theorizations put into relief the ways in which multiple relations of power are co-constitutive of each other, and how they operate inseparably, can provoke a re-orientation in the kinds of questions that might most fruitfully be asked about how power operates in our times and about the conditions that power produces at present.

But, to begin with QTPOC in France is a very broad and complex assemblage of subaltern gendered, sexed, and racialized subjects. It includes QT people from all of France's colonies and neo-colonies. It also encompasses citizens, migrants, refugees, and exiled subjects of colour from elsewhere who live in France. It is impossible to account for all these subjects here. Moreover, there is, of course, no seamless essentialized connection from subjects to perspectives. Subaltern subject-positionalities are no guarantee for critical thought. Indeed, the very power that produces any subject always risks getting inadvertently reproduced by the subject, including the subaltern subject.¹ QTPOC in France, like all other subjects, have a plethora of approaches to power, including some in collaboration with power. In this book, Nawo Crawford's prologue insightfully and directly addresses this question of divergent political stances, the reproduction of power within QTPOC groups and some of its activist consequences.

Because of the vastness of QTPOC in France and the multiplicities of political analytics, here I will consider the critical production of QTPOC in France through the lens of one of its most effaced yet radical and subaltern *fragments*, in the sense of Gyan Pandey, that is: hyper

critical activist *lesbians of colour*.² Because lesbians of colour often work in fusion with radical non-lesbian women of colour—who may be heterosexual, bisexual, asexual, transgender or cisgender—they too comprise the *fragment* made central here. To allow for some depth instead of only thin breadth, the focus is also limited to Paris and its *banlieues* (racialized working class suburbs).

Under current conditions of extreme erasure, and of what I call *race-and-colonialism amnesia*, to perceive the insurgent theory and practices of these lesbians of colour requires a shift in the criteria for what actually constitutes theory and practice.³ In dominant fields of intelligibility in the Global North, theory is imagined to be inscribed only in specific academic genres. Against this backdrop, Norma Alarcón's seminal text 'The Theoretical Subjects of This Bridge called My Back' demonstrates that feminist (and lesbian) of colour theory unfolds in many other genres, in forms that can include testimonio or witnessing or personal narratives, poetry, artistic productions, music, graffiti, and more.⁴ Kath Weston flags what she calls 'street theory' or critical theory that lesbian subjects create far outside the academy from their own vantage points.⁵ In the French situation, where there is not a single out lesbian of colour inside the French academy writing on lesbians of colour, this outside status is absolutely literal. But further, as Foucault reminds us, we can read manifestations of power in formations of resistance to power.⁶ Here, in addition to genres that Alarcón and Weston highlight, I address power's apparition both in activist practices of oppositional resistance, and in what the cultural geographer Steve Pile calls 'non-oppositional resistance.'⁷ In an influential article Jacques Derrida clarifies that every (literary) genre is a space-time in which some things can be said while other content must be excluded.⁸ With all of this in mind, I want to suggest that by engaging with an array of genres produced by critical lesbians of colour in France—from written to oral to activist practices—we can access multiple dimensions of their critiques of power. Accordingly, the archive for this analysis includes all of these kinds of critical expressions.

In a well-known anthropological study of witchcraft in the Bocage, Jeanne Favret-Saada sustains that a condition for objectivity is subjectivity.⁹ So, before I proceed I would like to briefly situate myself in this topic, but not to dwell on my positionality, nor to make of it a determinant factor. I will simply mention that I am a multiply racialized feminist-lesbian-queer subject, and have been involved in feminist, lesbian, and queer of colour groups and movements in France since the 1980s. I am co-founder of *collectif féministe contre le racisme et l'anti-semitisme* (feminist collective against racism and anti-semitism), and the *collectif lesbien contre le racisme et le fascisme* (lesbian

collective against racism and fascism), created in 1984 in Paris. I was a member of *lesbiennes contre la discrimination et le racisme* (Lesbians against Discrimination and Racism) (2005). I am currently a member of both *Lesbiennes of Colour* (Lesbians of Colour), founded in 2009, and of *Marche des Femmes pour la Dignité* (Women's March for Dignity) or *MAFED*, the relatively new women of colour collective against police brutality, founded in 2015. All of them will be further discussed below. The point here is that the materials I analyze include data from my own situated participation in some—even if only a fraction—of the archival discursive and activist productions in question.

In what follows, I will first speak to the historical context of lesbians of colour in France. In the following sections I will address their critical work through the axes of 'post-raciality,' segregationality, coloniality, and capitalism, before offering some concluding remarks.

Historical Contextualization

In a recent article, Fatima El Tayeb, Jin Haritaworn, and I highlight the curious quasi-total absence of QTPOC in historiographies of queer, feminist, immigrant, and anti-racism theories and social movements across western Europe, a topic on which each of us had previously written individually.¹⁰ We collectively observe for France, Germany, and The Netherlands that 'Europeans are generally presumed to be homogenously white, while racialized subjects are generally presumed to be uniformly straight and cis.'¹¹

Lesbians of colour in France are perfectly aware of their erasure, then and now. In the 1990s, the autonomous group called *Groupe du 6 novembre: lesbiennes issues du colonialisme, l'esclavage et l'immigration* (6 November Group: Lesbians out of Colonialism, Slavery and Immigration) published these words about how they are heard: 'Our narratives are considered an immense brouhaha, the cry of savages, incoherent and inconsistent screams.'¹² In this book, Sabreen, Moruni, and Aria of LOCs write: 'we are present but not seen; we are made invisible.'

To begin to undo some of the erasure, invisibilization and distorted racialized reception, and to provide context for today, we can first turn to a genealogy of the present.¹³ Current theoretical productions by lesbians in France constitute only a most recent phase. They arrive at the apex of much energetic organizing since the 1970s that is deeply entangled with colonialism, immigration, and the racism faced by all people of colour (POC) in France regardless of their sexuality.¹⁴

The earliest sizable population of POC in metropolitan France was

comprised of male colonial subjects who arrived between WWI and WWII. Most entered the labour market at its lowest rungs, in factories, and centred their activism around labour conditions. By the 1970s, under 'family reunification' laws, women immigrants entered in substantial numbers. These laws presume and reify a particular formation of the heterosexual family. They made women's legal status dependent upon the status of male counterparts: fathers, husbands, brothers. From then until now feminists of colour have fought for autonomous rights for immigrant women.

Given the French State's policy of bilateral treaties with its colonies and neo-colonies, and the entry into France of women from national liberation struggles in their home countries, it is not surprising that women of colour activists first organized largely along nation-of-origin lines. They created: *Groupe latino-américain des femmes* (Latin American Women's Group) (Paris 1972); *Association des femmes Khmères* (Association of Khmer Women) (Paris 1977); *Groupe femmes Algériennes* (Algerian Women's Group) (Paris 1978); and *Groupe femmes Marocaines* (Moroccan Women's Group) (Paris 1980). Some coalitional exceptions are: the *Coordination des femmes noires* (Network of Black Women) founded in Paris 1976, which was comprised of Black women from across the francophone world; the *Association nouvelle génération immigrée* (Association of the New Immigrant Women Generation) of Aubervilliers in 1981; and the *Association des femmes arabes immigrées* (Arab Immigrant Women's Association) of Gennevilliers in 1982. Also in 1982 Franco-French feminists formed the *Collectif de soutien aux femmes sans papiers* (Collective of Support for Undocumented Women).

The 1980s was a highpoint for organizing for immigrant women's rights and against racism, but also of threats to that organizing. Youth of colour, including feminists, created new activisms. The *Nanas Beurs* (Arab Chicks in *verlan*, a specifically *banlieu* language), established in 1986, addressed gendered racialized issues such as unemployment, education, parental severity, battering, divorce, and single straight women's and lesbian's issues.¹⁵ Soon they were joined by *Les Meufs Rebeux* (*verlan* for Beur Women) and then *Voix-Elles-Rebelles* (*verlan* for Their Rebellious Voices). There were lesbians in all these groups. Lesbians also participated in the December 1983 demonstration in Paris which was the culmination point for the '*Marche pour l'Égalité des droits*' that extended from Marseille to Paris, from October to December, that year.

In 1982, a number of feminist groups comprised of women of all origins gathered to open the *Maison des Femmes* (Women's Centre) at 8 citée Prost in Paris. About half of the groups were specifically women

of colour groups.

From 1984 to 1986 a series of brutal murders of racialized youth by white men mainly in the *banlieues* was widely reported in the press. In response, the coalitional *collectif féministe contre le racisme et l'anti-semitisme*, mentioned above, was formed by feminists of many origins who were activists at the *Maison des femmes* in March of 1984. Some belonged to other groups at the site as well, such as the *Nānas Beurs* or *Solidarités entr'elles* (Solidarity among Women). The *collectif féministe contre le racisme et l'anti-semitisme* formulated its own gendered, sexed, and racialized analysis of racism and activist agenda. The collective even worked to change some of the terms of the debates of the moment, including by forging its own identitarian designations. One such term it created was *femmes ciblées par le racisme* (women targeted by racism). It emerged in the group from a desire to construct a distinctly political definition that would not reproduce the criteria put forth in racist discourse (i.e. morphology, geographical origin, national origin, etc.) and instead flag the racist conduct of racist subjects. Later the collective deemed *femmes ciblées par le racisme* to be too aligned with passivity. It was abandoned and replaced with *femmes racisées* (racialized women), a term which acknowledges racism and puts into relief racialization as a process. Today *femmes racisées* is widely used by anti-racism activists. The *collectif féministe contre le racisme et l'anti-semitisme* worked on a daily basis within the (all genders) immigrant rights movement and against racism. It also organized a women's contingent in the now enormously renowned demonstration in Paris on 1 December 1984, *Convergence pour l'Égalité* (Convergence for Equality), that drew 60,000 people.

In 1985, the *lesbian collective against racism and fascism*, mentioned above, was created by a heterogeneous collection of lesbians in Paris. This rather small collective did spectacular street theatre and issued press releases. Notably it once demobilized the entire Paris subway system to protest public indifference about rape on a subway.

As grassroots anti-racism organizing become more massive and began to be covered increasingly in the press, especially from 1984 onward, the French Socialist Party in power tried to control anti-racism and anti-sexism activism. In 1984 it founded an organization called *SOS Racisme* to draw attention away from concrete grassroots demands and towards paternalistic peace and love. Its slogan was *'Touche pas à mon pote'* ('Don't touch my pal,' in the masculine tense), which put white French people, presumably men and boys, in the position of saviours of men and boys of colour while erasing women, girls, and folks of all other genders altogether. As the government poured money into the organization it spread throughout France, completely

overtaking and marginalizing grassroots movements. Later, in 2002, the Socialist Party funded *Ni Putes Ni Soumises* (Neither Whores Nor Submissive), which denounced sexism in the *banlieues* in ways that reinforced colonial-feminist representations of colonized men as always already more-sexist-and-queerphobic-than-thou.

In 1997, mainly white feminists but also some WOC, across all sexualities, organized *Reseau pour l'Autonomie Juridique des Femmes Immigrées et Réfugiées* (Network for the Legal Autonomy of Immigrant and Refugee Women) or RAJFIRE. It provides concrete legal support for immigrant and refugee women. But it is a difficult space for more radically oriented lesbians and women of colour as it is allied with the mainstream feminist movement which has no critique of colonialism.

Finally in November 1999 lesbians of Maghrebian, Sub-Saharan African, Afro-Caribbean, Latin American and mixed racialized backgrounds, united in the first autonomous group of lesbians of colour, the *Groupe du 6 novembre*.¹⁶ They created a book, website, journal special issue, and spaces of expression (art exhibits, film festivals). They spoke on immigrant radio, intervened in the UN Conference on racism in Durban, and organized demonstrations.

1999 is also the year of the founding of *Ma Divine*, a group discussed herein in the chapter by Sabreen, Moruni and Aria of the group LOCs.

In 2001, a collective of Arab lesbians called *Les N'Déeses* was founded after much communication between Arab lesbians in France and Algeria. In 2002 the *N'Déeses* created the website *Sehakia* (or lesbian in Arabic), publishing in French, Arabic, and English.

In 2005 a coalition of women of colour and white women created *Lesbiennes contre la discrimination et le racisme*. The group met at the *Maison des femmes de Paris* to discuss the reproduction of racism in among lesbians and what to do about it. Its members intervened in lesbian spaces, such the annual lesbian film festival in Paris, in an attempt to flag the absence of lesbians of colour in the films chosen for the festival, and to deconstruct the inadvertent reproduction of white supremacy in lesbian films and in the movement.

In 2009 a short-lived autonomous and pluralist group of lesbians of colour called *les 'L' en couleurs'* arose. ('*L' en couleurs*' is a lovely play on words that translates as: L- for lesbians in Colours; L-for 'elles' or they in the feminine in colours; and 'L' for 'ailes' or wings in colours or colourful wings.

In 2009 the autonomous group *Lesbiennes of colour* (Lesbians of Colour), and LOCs for short, was founded for lesbians of colour of all origins.¹⁷ It is a specifically decolonial feminist group. It remains very active and is discussed quite a bit below.

In 2014 activists created MWASI, for African and African diasporic

Black and Black racially mixed cisgender and transgender women.¹⁸ MWASI works intersectionally. It is anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, pro-veil, for the rights of sex workers, anti-racist, and in favor of all people creating the modes of their own emancipation.¹⁹

In early summer 2015, MAFED standing for Marche des femmes pour la Dignité (Women's March for Dignity) because the collective's first action was the March for Dignity in Paris, an autonomous WOC group that includes some lesbians, was formed to fight police violence in the *banlieues*. One of its main actions is discussed below in some detail.

Finally, in 2015, *AssiégéEs* (Under Siege), a group of QT and straight POC, was established by the Black transman blogger, public intellectual and activist Joao Gabriell, and others.²⁰ *AssiégéEs* asserts Afro-feminism, Black feminism, Islamic feminism, intersectionality, decolonial analytics, and sex workers' struggles. It aims for total revolution.

In 2016 two young women of colour activists, Sihame Assbague and Fania Noel, created the idea of a Decolonial Summer Camp: Formation in Political Anti-Racism, for people of colour only. Its goal was to create a space where people of colour could participate in their own education about the conditions they experience and the history of movements by people of colour against racism, and think together about the future. The idea for such a camp received publicity and soon was denounced by a host of public officials including the Minister for Education, as 'communalist,' 'dangerous to democracy,' 'anti-semitic' and about 'reverse racism.'²¹

Also in 2016, Black lesbians were centrally involved in creating the first Paris Black Pride, a point that Nawo Crawford discusses in some details in her prologue to this book.

Post-Raciality

Today the notion of 'post-raciality' is first and foremost a kind of code word for how not to think about race. Across much of Western Europe, several differential yet convergent mythologies of 'post-raciality' abound. To approach them we can take some Irigarayan advice, that is, to regress in order to progress.²² Each 'post-raciality formation is co-constituted with different versions of race, racialization and racism, and farther back, variant relations of colonialism and slavery.

France, of course, like other colonial powers, had many different colonial strategies, stylistics and racialized practices and they impact differently on the so-called 'post-racial' present.²³ For instance, settler

colonialism in Algeria laid the groundwork for what I call segregationality in current France. Instead of racialized postcolonial populations living in inner cities as, for instance, in Berlin's Kreuzberg area, in France, as in Algeria, postcolonial populations are separated, contained and controlled in working class racialized suburbs, or outer cities.²⁴

Another strand of French 'post-raciality' is the widespread recognition that 'race' is an unstable historical construction. It was disseminated in mainstream media for decades. Following World War II, UNESCO, which is based in France, soon after its founding hired many social scientists, including the extremely well known French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, to study race and create a critical statement about it. They produced 'The Race Question' in 1950. It was modified in 1951, 1967 and 1978. However, from 1951 onward the document rejected the idea that there were actual races. Other French scholars beyond the UNESCO groups also analyzed race, deconstructing years of contradictory scientific criteria and classifications. This work was well known to French audiences. A slippage developed from the idea that race categories are fiction to the idea that racism too doesn't exist. This logic is critiqued by Colette Guillaumin in her major work on race as she makes a point of developing the idea that racism exists 'with or without race.'²⁵

An equally important element to French 'post-raciality' is the historical construction of *laïcité* or French secularism as a main pillar of republicanism, most recently in relation to the colonial and postcolonial populations now in France. The definition of *laïcité* has fluctuated considerably in different periods since the passage of the 1901 law that inscribed it majorly into the juridical sphere. According to its most recognized specialist, Jean Baubérot, there are seven different kinds of French *laïcité* across the left and right today: anti-religious; Gaullist; strict separatist; open; identitary; and *concordataire*.²⁶ Instead of accepting the usual thesis of a particularly French *laïcité*, for Baubérot there is simply a dominant form of *laïcité* that passes for the sole form even as many other kinds co-exist historically and today. From a comparative point of view, it seems to me important to also note that *laïcité*'s elaboration takes place in the context of historically variable relations of separation between two very specific, even if dynamic, entities: the Catholic Church and the French State. Until today, an often overlooked aspect of Islamophobic paranoia targeting Islam in the *banlieues* is its continuity with the French State's paranoia around transnational Catholicism under the authority of the Pope, ostensibly in competition with the French State.

In France and elsewhere QTPOC organizing disturbs the tranquility of the 'post-raciality' mythology by foregrounding present racialized

conditions in continuity with colonial racism. No wonder such organizing, when noticed at all, is commonly met—on the right and left—with a backlash of moralistic accusations about POC, as opposed to political analysis. Autonomous groups of QTPOC that in general are specifically not separatist are routinely reduced to identity politics and thus to apolitical retrograde sociality.

How then do lesbians of colour and other QTPOC and allies of all colours make ‘raciality’s’ non ‘post’ status apparent? They expose it in all sorts of oppositional and non-oppositional resistance. One example that I provide elsewhere concerns how veiled Muslim lesbians in a massive demonstration against the 2004 anti-veil law in France disturbed the colonial-racialized construction of Muslim women as always-already oppressed by their male counterparts (Bacchetta 2009).²⁷ The veil, of course has different contextual significations for those who wear it and for the audiences that spectacularize it. They range from religious to social to political. Here I am concerned specifically with veiled lesbians in a context where they are directly opposing a law that disallows them their own relation to their religion. Importantly, the veiled lesbians did not out themselves as lesbians in the march. This calculated move thereby, among other things, circumvented their fetishization through the colonial-racist gaze. In queerphobic xenophobic discourse all Muslim lesbians are constructed in colonial terms as sexual perverts whether veiled or not. To be out as veiled lesbians would intensify and complicate this representation. In a colonial-feminist grid of intelligibility veiled Muslim lesbians code as subjects of internalized oppression, or as acting from (presumably hetero) sexual frustrations due to presumed-to-be inherent sexist ‘traditions’ in Islam: polygamy and the harem. Under such circumstances the self-invisibilization of lesbian sexuality is a complex agentic act of self-preservation based directly in lesbian of colour critiques of how ‘post-raciality’ and coloniality are gendered and sexed. Such a move, which consists in dodging and confusing the oppressive unavowed racist and colonial gaze, also inadvertently troubles the otherwise presumed-to-be seamless connection between the visibility of subjects and characteristics assigned to subjects upon which colonial-racism relies.

In other cases, the calculated visibilization of lesbians of colour, too, can trouble ‘post-raciality’ mythologies. An example is the public intervention by LOCs and other QTPOC to destruct an offensive poster and slogans proposed to a large LGBTIQ coalition of about 200 queer groups, the *Centre Gay et Lesbien* (Gay and Lesbian Centre), to announce the 2011 Gay Pride March.²⁸ That year the CGL commissioned an advertising agency—instead of relying upon the usual community call for LGBTIQ artists—to create the March materials. The agency proposed

a poster with a plethora of hardcore nationalist, racialized and sexist symbols. It featured a white rooster draped in a red boa, framed against a blue backdrop. A contentious discussion ensued. Radical QTPOC and allies objected to the poster on Facebook, in the blogosphere and finally in left media. The white rooster lent itself to interpretation as a ‘white washed’ version of a brown rooster, a traditional symbol of French nationalism. This seemingly innocuous colour choice was received by LOC and other QTPOC as code for white-supremacist France. The rooster’s gender presentation was also significant. The rooster, dressed in a red feather boa that invoked a cross-dressing gay male, positioned that subject position as the central and even exclusive iconic representation of the LGBT community. Lastly, the poster contained the slogan ‘For equality, in 2011 I march, in 2012 I vote’ thereby completely erasing many post-colonial immigrant and refugee queers to whom the right to vote is denied along with many other citizen rights. The racialized disjuncture in the poster’s reception can hyper-problematize ‘post-raciality’ and also provide a glimpse into the wider politics of queer racialized disjunctions that continue to unfold in the French Hom(m)o-Republic. We can observe that the whole affair was about what Haritaworn et. al. have called ‘murderous inclusion’ wherein QTPOC were interpellated to whitewash ourselves to fit into dominant LGBTIQ agendas.²⁹ Instead QTPOC, including LOCs, with a whole array of other discontented allies of all colours, formed a parallel, hyper-politicized, anti-colonial and anti-capitalist LGBTIQ Pride March.

Since 2014 the International Women’s Day March, too, has been spectacularly split, mainly along political and racialized lines. The separation first occurred when some white feminists in the mainstream march harassed hijabed Muslim women, transwomen and people from STRAUSS, the union of sex workers, a critical mass of whom are POC including QTPOC, who were also marching. Today there are two separate marches: the feminationalist-dominated March 8 International Women’s Day, and the more radically critical POC-friendly *8 Mars pour tous* (March 8 For Everyone).

Segregationality

A next point of exposure for lesbians of colour is what we can call *segregationality*, or a *convergence of spatialized conditions* of bifurcation that are co-produced through relations of power that include coloniality, capitalism, racism, gender and sexuality.³⁰ In brief, the concept of *segregationality* explicitly re-orientates the notion of segregation that relies upon the presupposition of what critical cultural

geographers call *abstract* space. In contrast, *segregationality* is about the *co-constitution* of spatial divides, borders, boundaries, essentializations and homogenizations, in relations of power. For *segregationality* all spatial formations have a genealogy, a present, and especially a multiplicity of dimensions that include and exceed the spatial, that are not fixed but rather constantly in dispute, motion and flux.

Segregationality has as its point of departure many prior insights into critical cultural geography, and especially the large threefold division of concepts of space that it proposes: *abstract space*; *relative space*; and *space as a production*. *Abstract* space or Euclidian space is an essentialist notion of space as a passive backdrop to human agency. *Abstract space* specifically informed colonialism and its forms of *segregationality*. *Abstract* space is presumed in the intrusive construction of separatist 'European' quarters in many French colonies, and in the current spatializations of race in subaltern *banlieues*. A second idea of space is *relative* space or space conceptualized in its relation to social relations. It corresponds to a structuralist approach to space. The third conceptualization of space is the Lefebvrian and post-Lefebvrian notion of the *production of space*.³¹ It is a poststructuralist notion deeply inspired by Marxism.

Many manifestations of *segregationality* unfold across all of France and its overseas territories, and characterize the relationships between these entities as well. But here, in the interests of time, I am concerned specifically with the *racialization of space* and *spatialization of race* that traverse urban Paris and its *banlieues*. Urban Paris is segmented into *quartiers* or neighborhoods largely by class, race, religion, and, as the concentration of white gay male spaces in the *Marais* brings into relief, sexuality. In both urban Paris and the *banlieues*, the west side tends to be whitest and the east side most of colour. Other pertinent spaces of *segregationality* are the urban enclaves constituted by prisons, Roma settlements and refugee encampments.

The French *banlieues* were constructed as early as 1860, but have gone through major social and racial transformation since that time. By the 1990s their cheap housing was deteriorating. By 2005 unemployment ranged from 20% to 85%.³² Residents have survived by creating an unofficial economy which includes open air markets for food, clothing and even cell phones. Nearly every aspect of life has an alternative mode of organization, including day care and transport.

Notwithstanding this intricate self-organization, the *banlieues* are represented in dominant discourses as lawless jungles requiring State intervention and control. They are pathologized as 'degenerate' spaces that are dangerous for women and queers.³³ Since at least the 1980s the *banlieues* have been sites of intense police presence, surveillance,

random stop-and-frisk and violence. For several scholars the police operate in the *banlieues* as a particularly violent paramilitary force beyond the visual scape of the rest of the public.³⁴ As part of the military apparatus of the State, as Althusser would have it, the police also work in complicity with other State elements such as the courts, career bureaucrats and elected politicians.³⁵

From 2002 onward, the government funded women's organization *Ni Putes Ni Soumises*, mentioned above, helped extend and intensify the representation of the *banlieues* as hotbeds of sexism, sexual violence and later queerphobia. It confirmed men of colour as *more-sexist-than-thou*, that women of colour need to be saved by white people, and that all people of colour are inherently queerphobic. Within the past few years, these controlling images were revived in the centre-right and left mediatic representation of Houria Bouteldja, co-founder and spokesperson for the decolonial Party of the Indigenous of the Republic, as hyper queerphobic. These constructions are all the more paradoxical if we recall that rape occurs across all racialized and socio-economic groups, that the gendered conditions of women of colour are deeply racialized (for example, relative to women's employment, education, and housing), and that the entire leadership and overwhelming majority of participants in the massive queerphobic anti-gay-marriage movement in France—active from 2013 until today—are white French people.

Today, women of colour, queer, and straight in the *banlieues* are spectacularly exposing *banlieues* conditions and working to change them. An example is Amal Bentounsi, who founded the group *Urgence: Notre Police Tue* (Emergency: Our Police Kills) after her brother Amine was fatally shot in the back on 20 April 2012 during a search-and-frisk in *Noisy-le-sec*.³⁶ *Urgence* is comprised of family members of the murdered. In 2015 it was at Amal Bentounsi's initiative that the MAFED, which I mentioned earlier, formed to fight police violence. MAFED's first action was a massive demonstration on 31 October 2015 in Paris against police murders, led by women of colour. As Amal Bentounsi's activities have received increasing press coverage, she too has been ruthlessly and wrongly accused of being queerphobic.

Coloniality and Decolonial Critique

Let us now turn to coloniality. Drawing on Walter Dignolo, Ramon Grosfoguel, and María Lugones, we can think of coloniality as comprising the relations of power that characterize colonialism and its extension in discourses and practices today across the planet (Dignolo 2000; Grosfoguel 2008; Lugones 2008).³⁷ Additionally, coloniality for

me is a co-production that is inseparably constituted with many other relations of power, such as gender as Lugones insightfully argues, but also sexuality, race, and capitalism.³⁸

In France, part of the national identification as 'post-racial' as I invoked earlier entails either imagining colonialism to be irrelevant or to be so wonderful as to deserve continual praise. The French law of 23 February 2005 stipulates that French history must be taught in public schools in ways that place French colonialism 'in a positive light.'

Lesbians of colour have long troubled the French State's dualistic invisibilization and spectacular deformed framing of colonialism. For instance, the *Groupe du 6 Novembre* defined its members and many struggles in direct opposition to colonialism. More recently, the group LOCs has been articulating a vision of decolonizing feminism which it also puts into practice in the kinds of issues it takes up.

Currently a major coloniality question for the LOCs is opposition to wars in the Global South, with particular attention to the situation of lesbian and women refugees that the wars produce. In this book, Sabreen, Moruni and Aria discuss the group's analysis and activist work on this question. I can only add that, while many organizations work with lesbian refugees, including queer ones such as *ARDHIS*, and feminists at the *Maison des femmes de Paris*, LOCs' analysis and practical intervention differs fundamentally. Some LOCs members, including its founders, are refugees or living in exile. The group directly discusses colonialism, white saviour narratives, and forms of neo-liberal charity that maintain subaltern refugee and exiled subjects in relations of inferiority and dependency. LOCs works with lesbian refugees to help them legalize their situation, learn French, and get jobs. In doing so, LOCs members relate to lesbian refugees as sisters. Far from idealizing France as a safe haven for queers, they provide a useful critique of its racism and of lesbophobia.

LOCs members and often the lesbian former refugees whom they have brought to France, are in the forefront of organizing demonstrations against the French government's action in the wars that create refugees and its inaction in the refugee crisis itself. Some of LOCs' actions have been supported by broad coalitions including immigrant organizations and human rights groups such as Amnesty International.

Capitalism and Class

The most politicized lesbians and feminists of colour in France have taken a directly oppositional stance against capitalism, often in the first platforms at the founding of their groups. The relationship to

capitalism of many QTPOC groups in France is interestingly and productively complex. Many of the groups implicitly recognize capitalism as deeply gendered, sexed, racialized, and embedded in coloniality, and not simply as reduceable to class relations. Elsewhere I theorize this kind of approach where I argue that capitalism is a co-production in multiple relations of power at once.³⁹ From day one MWASI flagged its opposition specifically as a group of Black feminists to capitalism on its website. In practice, feminists and lesbians of colour are present as leaders and participants in every working class struggle, and bring to them gendered, sexed, racialized, and decolonial analytical perspectives. They speak from within. The overwhelming majority of women and lesbians of colour are working class, as are the majority of other people of colour. New research demonstrating the prevalence of racial discrimination in employment is currently getting some media attention.

Lesbians of colour are also leaders and participants in the *Nuit Debout* (Rise up at night) movement at this time.⁴⁰ The *Nuit Debout* demonstrations began in France on 31 March 2016 to protest anti-labour reforms known as the El Khomri Law. They demonstrate regularly at Place de la Republique near the centre of Paris. Like everywhere else, in France and in the *Nuit Debout* movement the relations of power in society are also sometimes reproduced in movements. In Occupy in New York some respectability-obsessed demonstrators tried to evict the homeless. In San Francisco people of colour were marginalized. In France, to counter the racialized relations of power that invisibilize subalternly racialized and gendered subjects and to foreground race, gender, and class together, MWASI helped to organize an autonomous Black and anti-racism mobilization on 9 April 2016 against the new anti-labour laws.

In both the broad and autonomous protests against the law, women and lesbians of colour reveal much about the gendered, sexed, and racialized conditions of racial capitalism. They open a critique of how neoliberal economies fetishize the mobile white heterosexual male worker while Eurocentric discourses about migration demonize the movement of all racialized bodies, thereby legitimizing policing, immobilization in prisons, and containment in the *banlieues*.⁴¹ In lesbian of colour actions we can read the murderous logics of hyper privatization, the transformation of subjects into individualistic workers and consumers, the carving of niches such as the pink market for queers, and how all of this is informed by and in continuity with colonialism.

Under these conditions, women and lesbians of colour can trouble the dominant notion of capitalism as a question of presumed-to-be neutral economic classes in which the dominant model of what Norma Alarcón critically calls 'the universal subject' (meaning the white, middle

class, heterosexual woman subject) and what Irigaray critically calls simply the 'subject,' (meaning the white straight cisgendered male), worker or not, functions to erase all others.

Concluding Remarks

I hope to have provided some elements to understand how the subaltern *fragment* comprised of lesbian of colour critical theories and practices in France puts into relief how multiplicities of relations of power—gender, sexuality, racism, capitalism, class, coloniality, war—are not separate phenomena but are co-constitutive of each other and of current conditions in France. From the *decoloniality* approach of the *Groupe du 6 novembre*, LOCs and MAFED, to the *intersectionality* approach of MWASI, and the total revolution stance of AssiégiéEs, and keeping in mind the anti-capitalist, pro-worker, and anti-war stances of all these groups, we can infer the effectiveness and the necessity of analyzing every condition, subjects, object, and event as produced through *co-formations* and *co-productions* of power.

In practical terms this suggests that any serious social movement for economic, social, cultural, and psychic transformation today can most productively configure strategies and tactics for resisting not just one or another relation of power at a time, but rather the ensemble of co-constitutive relations of power in question, inseparably. To learn to do so is to come closer to uprooting conditions that range from precarious to outright deadly, for all subjects, including the most vulnerable subjects. It is to draw near to opening up a space, and holding space, for the creative construction of other ways of life.

Notes

- 1 Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power,' in *Michel Foucault: Power*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1994), 326–48.
- 2 Gyanendra Pandey, 'In Defense of the Fragment: Writing about Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today,' *Representations* 37 (1992), 27–55.
- 3 Paola Bacchetta, 'Co-Formations: Sur les spatialités de résistance de lesbiennes 'of colour' en France,' *Sexualité, genre et société* 1/1 (2009), accessed 27 September 2016, <https://gss.revues.org/810>; Paola Bacchetta, *Co-Motion: Situated Planetarities, Co-Formations and Co-Productions in Feminist and Queer Alliances* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

- 4 Norma Alarcón, 'The Theoretical Subject(s) of *This Bridge Called My Back* and Anglo-American Feminism,' in *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1990), 356–69.
- 5 Kath Weston, *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997).
- 6 Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité, vol. 1: La volonté de savoir* (Paris, Gallimard, 1976); Foucault, 'The Subject and Power,' 326–48.
- 7 Steve Pile, 'Introduction: Opposition, Political Identities and Spaces of Resistance,' in *Geographies of Resistance*, ed. Steve Pile and Michael Keith (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1–32.
- 8 Jacques Derrida, 'La loi du genre,' in *Parages* (Paris: Galilé, 1986), 263.
- 9 Jeanne Favret-Saada, *Les Mots, la Mort, les Sorts: la sorcellerie dans le bocage* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977).
- 10 Paola Bacchetta, Fatima El-Tayeb and Jin Haritaworn, 'Queer of Colour Formations and Translocal Spaces in Europe,' *Environment and Planning D: Society & Space* 33/5 (2015), 769–778; Bacchetta, 'Co-Formations'; Fatima El Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Jin Haritaworn, *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2015).
- 11 Bacchetta et al., 'Translocal Spaces.'
- 12 'notre parole' est 'considéré comme un immense brouhaha, cri du sauvage, hurlements incohérents et inconsistants'; Bêtes Noires, 'Des lesbiennes blanches revent notre silence,' in *Warriors/ Guerrieres*, ed. Groupe du 6 Novembre (Paris: Nomades/Langues Editions, 2001), 25–30.
- 13 Michel Foucault, 'Nietzche, la généalogie, l'histoire,' in *Hommage a Jean Hyppolite* (Paris: PUF, 1971).
- 14 For detailed information on the history of immigrant women's struggles in France, see the exposition comprised of over 250 documents entitled 'Traces, mémoires, histoire des mouvements de femmes de l'immigration en France depuis 1970' ('Traces, Memories, History of Immigrant Women's Movements in France Since 1970'), *Musée de l'histoire de l'immigration*, accessed 27 September 2016, <http://www.histoire-immigration.fr/la-cite/repertoire-de-projets/traces-memoires-histoire-des-mouvements-de-femmes-de-l-immigration-en-france>. Unfortunately, the history of QTPOC and especially lesbian, transgender, and bisexual women of colour is yet to be written.
- 15 Though *Beur* means Arab, in practice the beur movement organized among all people targeted by racism. Beur came to signify a vibrant generation that was creating its own politics and culture.
- 16 Nawo Crawford, who writes the prologue to this book, is a co-founding member.
- 17 LOCs authors of the chapter on 'Decolonial Activism in White French Feminist Land' herein are among the co-founding members.

- 18 MWASI means woman in Lingala, a language spoken in the Congo.
- 19 MWASI: *Collectif Afroféministe*, accessed 27 September 2016, <https://mwasicollectif.com/>.
- 20 See *Assiégées*, accessed 27 September 2016, <http://www.assiégé-e-s.com/>.
- 21 'Camp d'été décolonial: qui a peur de la non-mixité et de l'antiracisme politique?' *Contre-attaques*, 1 May 2016, accessed 27 September 2016, <http://contre-attaques.org/magazine/article/camp-d-ete>.
- 22 Luce Irigaray, *Et l'une ne bouge pas sans l'autre* (Paris: Minuit, 1979).
- 23 Anne McClintock, 'The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term "Post-Colonialism"', in *Social Text* 31/32 (1992), 84–98.
- 24 See Janet Abu-Lughod, *Rabat: Urban Apartheid in Morocco* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Paul A. Silverstein and Chantal Tetrault, 'Postcolonial Urban Apartheid,' SSRN, 11 June 2006, accessed 27 September 2016, http://riotsfrance.ssrc.org/Silverstein_Tetrault/.
- 25 Colette Guillaumin, *L'Idéologie raciste* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972).
- 26 Jean Baubérot, *Les 7 laïcités françaises* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 2015).
- 27 Bacchetta, 'Co-Formations.'
- 28 Paola Bacchetta, 'Poster-Posturing: Queer Racialized Disjunctures in the Hom(m)oRepublic,' talk at Center for Race and Gender, UC Berkeley, 23 February 2012. For online summaries, see *UC Berkley*, accessed 27 September 2016; <http://crg.berkeley.edu/content/visual-constructions-race-and-stigma-europe> and <http://crg.berkeley.edu/content/visual-constructions>.
- 29 Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman and Silvia Posocco, 'Introduction: Murderous Inclusions,' *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 15/4 (2013), 445–52; Sima Shaksari, 'Killing Me Softly with Your Rights: Queer Death and the Politics of Rightful Killing,' in *Queer Necropolitics*, eds. Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman and Silvia Posocco (London: Routledge, 2014).
- 30 Paola Bacchetta, 'Segregationality and the Politics of QTPOC Subalternity Spatialities in France,' Keynote talk for Annual Conference of Sexualities and Space Specialty Group, Association of American Geographers, San Francisco, 28 March 2016.
- 31 Henri Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1974).
- 32 Silverstein and Tetrault, 'Postcolonial Urban Apartheid.'
- 33 Sherene Razack, 'When place becomes race,' in *Space, Race and Law*, ed. Sherene Razack (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002); Bacchetta et al., 'Translocal Spaces.'
- 34 Didier Fassin, *Enforcing order: an ethnography of urban policing* (Boston: Polity, 2013); Trica Danielle Keaton, 'Racial profiling and the "French exception",' in *French Cultural Studies* 24/2 (2013), 231–42.
- 35 Louis Althusser, 'Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'état,' in *Sur la Reproduction*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1995), 269–314.
- 36 Amal Bentounsi, 'Interview: Police Brutality, Racism and the March of Dignity and Against Racism in Paris. With Paola Bacchetta' *Women's*

- Magazine, KPFA Radio*, 26 October 2015, accessed 27 September 2016, <https://kpfa.org/episode/womens-magazine-october-26-2015/>.
- 37 Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Ramón Grosfoguel, 'Transmodernity, Border Thinking, and Global Coloniality,' *Humandee: Human Management and Development*, 4 July 2008, accessed 14 January 2013, <http://www.humandee.org/spip.php?article111>; Maria Lugones, 'The Coloniality of Gender,' in *The Worlds & Knowledges Otherwise Project*, ed. Manuela Boatcă, Vol. 2, Dossier 2: On the De-Colonial (II): Gender and Decoloniality, 1 April 2008, accessed 27 September 2016, <https://globalstudies.trinity.duke.edu/wko-v2d2>.
- 38 Paola Bacchetta, 'Décoloniser le Féminisme: Intersectionnalités, Assemblages, Co-Formations, Co-Productions' (Decolonizing Feminism: Intersectionalities, Assemblages, Co-Formations, Co-Productions),' *Cahiers du CEDREF*, 2015, accessed 27 September 2016, <https://cedref.revues.org/833>.
- 39 Bacchetta, 'Décoloniser le Féminisme' and *Co-Motion*.
- 40 Of the several translations of *Nuit Debout* including *Up All Night and Standing at Night*, I prefer this rendition because of its more accurate political connotation.
- 41 Bacchetta et al., 'Translocal Spaces,' 774.