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## ÉTAT PRÉSENT

### LGBTQ+ STUDIES

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#### *Queering French studies?*

How to consider the relation between queer theory and French intellectual culture? It is widely known that the theoretical origins of American theorists such as Judith Butler, Eve Sedgwick, and David Halperin lie in French thinkers like Simone de Beauvoir, Michel Foucault, Monique Wittig, and Jacques Derrida. But it is also widely known that American queer thought made its intellectual way back to France in turn. A 2012 special issue of *Paragraph* was titled *Queer Theory's Return to France*, and editors Oliver Davis and Hector Kollias describe 'the return of a native'.<sup>1</sup> That return, however, was met with resistance, a result of traditional disciplinarity in the French university system and, more broadly, of republican universalism which tends to discourage identity-drive research or thinking.

The Franco-American (dis)connection in queer theory is so complicated that it has become an object of study unto itself. Cornelia Möser considers that 'if there is such a thing as a "French queer", its particularity could be seen in the peculiar situation created by theoretical travelling between the US and France'.<sup>2</sup> Bruno Perreau studies the cultural and academic French response to queer theory at length, focusing on the intellectual movement as 'the object of reinterpretations, accretions, and deletions that continually redefine its contextual meaning'.<sup>3</sup> To talk of a French reception is not really possible 'due to the great plasticity of the way queer theory is used and to the mosaic-like nature of queer theory itself'.<sup>4</sup> What can be studied — as Perreau himself does so beautifully — is 'the complex relationship to identity and the fantasies that arise from the idea of American culture'.<sup>5</sup> The manner in which queer studies travels back and forth across the Atlantic, in ways that cannot necessarily be easily documented or even traced, in the end leaves the field intellectually hybrid — neither 'American' nor 'French'. Most visibly, the important work of Sam Bourcier (especially the three volumes titled *Queer Zones*) has been taken as a kind of Franco-American queer theory that

<sup>1</sup> Oliver Davis and Hector Kollias, Editors' Introduction to *Queer Theory's Return to France*, ed. by Oliver Davis and Hector Kollias (= special issue, *Paragraph*, 35.2 (2012)), pp. 139–43 (p. 139).

<sup>2</sup> Cornelia Möser, 'Translating Queer Theory to France and Germany: Tickets and Boundaries for a Traveling Theory', in *Import–Export–Transport: Queer Theory, Queer Critique and Activism in Motion*, ed. by Sushila Mesquita, Maria Katharina Wiedlack, and Katrin Lasthofer (Vienna: Zaglossus, 2012), pp. 147–62 (p. 156). See also the essays in *Queer Theory's Return to France*, ed. by Davis and Kollias.

<sup>3</sup> Bruno Perreau, *Queer Theory: The French Response* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

incorporates but also critiques and extends queer theory.<sup>6</sup> Lucille Cairns takes Bourcier's 'very concern to impugn French republicanism/universalism in the name of queer [as] a French specificity within European queer theorizing'.<sup>7</sup> Lara Cox reads Bourcier as opening up the queer archive, in a Derridean manner, 'displac[ing] the centrality of Butler, and the French poststructuralism that she becomes a cipher for, in the archive of queer made in France'.<sup>8</sup> Originally published in French, Paul B. Preciado's *Manifeste contra-sexuel* (2000), published in English translation in 2018 with a foreword by Jack Halberstam, is fast becoming canonical in queer studies in the US, marking yet another transatlantic return of sorts (though Preciado studied in the US).<sup>9</sup> French academics conducting queer readings of literary texts also mix traditions and theoretical approaches. For example, Muriel Plana's *Fictions queer* does much more than apply American queer theory, also putting forward another theoretical genealogy by taking queer as an aesthetic as much as a subjectivity.<sup>10</sup>

It is not just French or French-speaking scholars who have reformulated Franco-American intellectual relations: scholars based in the US have also corrected American misunderstandings about French thought at the basis of queer studies. Lynne Huffer's *Mad for Foucault: Rethinking the Foundations of Queer Theory* (2010), for instance, offered a corrective to assumptions about Foucault's hyper-canonical *History of Sexuality* as laying out a theoretical foundation from which to think about the historical shift from sexual 'act' ('sodomy') to 'identity' ('homosexual'), and arguing for Foucault's work on madness as key to his queer thinking.<sup>11</sup>

A key strand of anglophone queer thought, sometimes referred to as 'post-queer', is prompted by the thought of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.<sup>12</sup> These French thinkers did not provide much in the way of theoretical substrata in the first wave of queer theory, which was predicated not so much on the idea of flows

<sup>6</sup> See for instance Thomas Liano, Review of Sam Bourcier, *Queer Zones: la trilogie*, *French Studies*, 74.2 (2020), 322–23. See especially Sam Bourcier, *Queer Zones: la trilogie* (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2018). On Bourcier, see also Perreau, *Queer Theory*, pp. 88–93. Bourcier's approach to queer is sometimes contrasted with Didier Eribon's more institutional approach (see for example Perreau, *Queer Theory*, p. 91).

<sup>7</sup> Lucille Cairns, 'Queer, Republican France, and its Euro-American "Others"', in *What's Queer about Europe?: Productive Encounters and Re-enchanting Paradigms*, ed. by Mireille Rosello and Sudeep Dasgupta (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), pp. 91–114 (p. 93).

<sup>8</sup> Lara Cox, 'Reaching for Archive Fever: A Tall Tale about Queer "Made in France"', *Paragraph*, 39.3 (2016), 319–34 (p. 329).

<sup>9</sup> Paul B. Preciado, *Manifeste contra-sexuel* (Paris: Baland, 2000); Paul B. Preciado, *Countersexual Manifesto*, trans. by Kevin Gerry Dunn, foreword by Jack Halberstam (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> Muriel Plana, *Fictions queer: esthétique et politique de l'imagination dans la littérature et les arts du spectacle* (Dijon: Éditions universitaires de Dijon, 2018). Plana notes her own 'particularité': 'c'est de ne pas plaquer des théories sur des œuvres ni d'utiliser les œuvres pour les "illustrer", mais d'articuler dialogiquement approches esthétiques et approches politiques — inspirées entre autres des pensées féministes et queer et des philosophies politiques contemporaines, le queer dont je trace d'ailleurs une généalogie alternative en les reliant aux pensées politiques du théâtre épique du début du vingtième siècle'; Plana also commented to me that resistance to queer studies in France is a problem not so much in the university as much as in 'le milieu éditorial et les médias nationaux' (personal communication). I would like to record my thanks to Muriel Plana for granting me permission to quote from her email here.

<sup>11</sup> Lynne Huffer, *Mad for Foucault: Rethinking the Foundations of Queer Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). See also Huffer's *Foucault's Strange Eros* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).

<sup>12</sup> See for instance Claire Boyle, 'Post-Queer (Un)Made in France?', *Queer Theory's Return to France*, ed. by Davis and Kollias, pp. 265–80.

and becomings, but more on dismantling normativities in a deconstructionist vein. But queerness is there in Deleuze and Guattari, as when we read: ‘we are transsexual in an elemental, molecular sense’.<sup>13</sup> Focusing on becoming, more than destabilizing or disrupting heteronormativity per se, is now a bona fide critical option.<sup>14</sup> David Ruffolo’s *Post-Queer Politics* relies on the concept of becoming: ‘Rather than focusing on *being* (which I consider to be inextricably linked to subjectivity) post-queer attends to the *becomings* of life that do not reiterate the past but move forward as continuous productions.’<sup>15</sup> Thinking queer through Deleuze has become intellectually canonical most visibly perhaps in film studies. Nick Davis’s *The Desiring-Image* focuses on ways in which ‘the *desiring-image* [is] a constitutive dimension of *all* cinematic images [that] take open-ended variation as their guiding premise [and] work against normative models of sexuality and their social, political, and epistemic buttresses’.<sup>16</sup> The potential queerness of Deleuzian ‘affect’ has yet to catch on in publications in French studies as much as in some other disciplines, though Enda McCaffrey offers an excellent case study of relations between queerness, becoming animal, and affect in two of Alain Guiraudie’s queer films.<sup>17</sup>

As an American scholar who is housed in a French programme but also teaches interdisciplinary courses on sexuality in a gender studies programme, I routinely find myself teaching French texts as queer theory (for example, Wittig, Guy Hocquenghem, Foucault, Deleuze, Preciado) while also teaching American theoretical texts in French seminars, offering students new ways to think about both areas. Perreau studies the interpretive communities created in France by the reception of queer theory: the American classroom is another community in which the interface between French and American texts yields intellectually and pedagogically productive results. It is this critical interface that interests me here. In this review article, I cannot discuss, or even cite, all the wonderful recent work in LGBTQ+ studies, focusing instead on three particular areas: corporeality and transgender studies; historicity and temporality; and francophone Africa.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *L’Anti-Œdipe: capitalisme et schizophrénie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972/73), p. 82. See also the essays in *Deleuze and Queer Theory*, ed. by Chrysanthi Nigianni and Merl Storr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009). For a critique of Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘molecular homosexuality’, see Preciado, ‘On Philosophy as a Better Way of Doin’ It in the Ass — Deleuze and “Molecular Homosexuality”’, in *Countersexual Manifesto*, pp. 141–47.

<sup>14</sup> The idea is influential in transgender studies. See T. Garner, ‘Becoming’, *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 1.1–2 (2014), 30–32. On queerness and Deleuze in modern texts, see Michael Lucey, *Someone: The Pragmatics of Misfit Sexualities from Colette to Hervé Guibert* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), pp. 147–50.

<sup>15</sup> David V. Ruffolo, *Post-Queer Politics* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 7; original emphasis.

<sup>16</sup> Nick Davis, *The Desiring-Image: Gilles Deleuze and Contemporary Queer Cinema* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 8; original emphasis.

<sup>17</sup> Enda McCaffrey, ‘Lupine and Zig-Zag Lines: Queer Affects in Alain Guiraudie’s *L’Inconnu du lac* and *Rester vertical*’, *Contemporary French Civilization*, 44.4 (2019), 387–415. On queer affect, see also Todd W. Reeser, ‘Theorizing the Masculinity of Affect’, in *Masculinities and Literary Studies: Intersections and New Directions*, ed. by Josep M. Armengol and others (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 109–20.

<sup>18</sup> While the third area treated here is francophone Africa, space prevents me from treating work on francophone regions such as Quebec and the Caribbean. On Quebec, see the important volume *QuébeQueer: le queer dans les productions littéraires, artistiques et médiatiques québécoises*, ed. by Isabelle Boisclair, Pierre-Luc Landry, and Guillaume Poirier Girard (Montréal: Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 2020). The editors of *QuébeQueer* offer a state-of-the-art of relations between Quebecois studies and queer studies, noting: ‘Au Québec, la pensée queer semble avoir eu relativement peu d’échos, tout comme elle paraît avoir peu nourri les créateurs et créatrices, du moins de façon

*Corporeality, the body, and transgender studies*

The body is making a comeback in queer studies. Or perhaps the body never left us to begin with. In the 1990s, the body was often considered a Foucauldian surface upon which discourse was inscribed or a Butlerian locus on which sex was established by gender. The widespread use of the concept of gender performativity in a way removed the idea that the body was a material object in itself that could be considered as matter. The queer body could perhaps skirt the rules of normative discourse or of gender, but the meaning of matter itself was also often skirted. Under the influence of new materialism and transgender studies, materiality itself has been rethought in new ways. Jay Prosser's trenchant critique of Butler in *Second Skins*, to take one example, opened the question of how transgender corporeal experiences were missing in Butler and not reducible to performativity; as Prosser writes, '[t]he materiality of language in contemporary thought has taken the place of the materiality of the body'.<sup>19</sup> More recently, Emma Heaney has challenged Butler for her 'allegorical assumption' that 'trans woman [. . .] is the writerly object that can only be read one way', as a trope in the service of queer theory, not on her own corporeal or discursive terms.<sup>20</sup>

An influential thinker correcting gender studies' focus on bodies as surface is Paul B. Preciado. His *Manifeste contra-sexuel* proposes 'dildonics' or 'sexuality of the postgender and post-sexually identified subject', which aims to disband the hegemony of the penis/phallus, rendering it a Derridean supplement, and to open up ways to rethink the body itself.<sup>21</sup> Questions of signification are not at all absent from this performative manifesto, with Derridean ideas on the linguistic supplement looming large and the book itself described as 'a technique for fabricating sexuality', but the body is not rendered as pure signification either.<sup>22</sup> Language and matter cannot ultimately be separated in the era of 'the pharmacopornographic regime',<sup>23</sup> necessarily existing in dialogue, as is also the case in his important *Testo Junkie* (2008, French/Spanish; 2013 English).<sup>24</sup> Elliot Evans's *The Body in French Queer Thought from Wittig to Preciado* takes up this precise question of language and matter as inseparable, arguing for a permeability between the two in French thought that returns us to a view of corporeality that is reminiscent of Montaigne's imbrication of body and soul. Evans 'seeks to take account of a reflexivity, a

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explicite'. Boisclair, Landry, and Girard, 'Avant-propos: la pensée queer', *QuébeQueer*, pp. 7–34 (p. 12). There is also a substantial body of work on film director Xavier Dolan. On the francophone Caribbean, see Charlotte Hammond, *Entangled Otherness: Cross-gender Fabrications in the Francophone Caribbean* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019); and Jarrod Hayes, *Queer Roots for the Diaspora: Ghosts in the Family Tree* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), esp. Chapter I, 'Looking for Roots among the Mangroves', pp. 41–76.

<sup>19</sup> Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> Emma Heaney, *The New Woman: Literary Modernism, Queer Theory, and the Trans Feminine Allegory* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2017), p. 226.

<sup>21</sup> Preciado, *Countersexual Manifesto*, p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> Paul B. Preciado, *Testo junkie: sexe, drogue et biopolitique* (Paris: Grasset, 2008); published in English as *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*, trans. by Bruce Benderson (New York: Feminist Press, 2013).

symbiosis between material body and language overlooked in much contemporary theory influenced by poststructuralism'.<sup>25</sup> The third chapter returns to Wittig to show how permeability is not a new invention in the twenty-first century — as it might be taken to be in reading Preciado — but is present already in texts such as *Virgile, non* and *Le Corps lesbien*.<sup>26</sup> Evans's book offers a series of readings (including of the artist ORLAN) but also a blueprint to enter into other texts in which corporeality and discourse together constitute subjectivities. The volume *Queer(y)ing Bodily Norms in Francophone Culture* proposes a 'queer(y)ing' methodology that is rooted in LGBTQ+ subjectivities and bodies, but also extends the notion of queer with chapters that 'question normativity outside an LGBTQ+ space'.<sup>27</sup> The volume aims to 'compare how different media and genre queer(y) problematic bodily norms' and opens up, as queer studies more broadly has done, the possibility that queer does not have to designate same-sex sexuality per se but can be a mode of thinking about French texts.<sup>28</sup>

Generally more sociological than humanistic in orientation, transgender studies in a French academic context has blossomed in recent years, thanks to innovative scholars such as Karine Espineira, Maud-Yeuse Thomas, and Arnaud Alessandrin.<sup>29</sup> Some of this work relates to — as it transforms — American transgender studies.<sup>30</sup> Literary, autobiographical, and cinematic production by and about trans\* folk has increased in recent years, leading to more academic work on transgender topics in French contexts, particularly in film.<sup>31</sup> Through transgender

<sup>25</sup> Elliot Evans, *The Body in French Queer Thought from Wittig to Preciado: Queer Permeability* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), p. ii.

<sup>26</sup> Monique Wittig, *Virgile, non* (Paris: Minuit, 1985); *Le Corps lesbien* (Paris: Minuit, 1973). Similarly, see Lisa Downing, 'Antisocial Feminism? Shulamith Firestone, Monique Wittig and Proto-queer Theory', and Anne Emmanuelle Berger, 'The Queer Body of MLF Literature', *Paragraph*, 41.3 (2018), 364–79, 268–84.

<sup>27</sup> Polly Galis, Maria Tomlinson, and Antonia Wimbush, Introduction to *Queer(y)ing Bodily Norms in Francophone Culture*, ed. by Polly Galis, Maria Tomlinson, and Antonia Wimbush (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2021), pp. 1–25 (p. 5).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>29</sup> See, for instance, Arnaud Alessandrin, *Sociologie des transidentités* (Paris: Le Cavalier bleu, 2018); *Actualité des trans studies*, ed. by Arnaud Alessandrin (Paris: Éditions des archives contemporaines, 2018); Karine Espineira, 'Les Corps trans: disciplinés, militants, esthétiques, subversifs', *Revue des sciences sociales*, 59 (2018), 84–95; and Karine Espineira and Maud-Yeuse Thomas, 'Études trans: interroger les conditions de production et de diffusion des savoirs', *Genre, sexualité & société*, 22 (2019), <<https://journals.openedition.org/gss/5916>> [accessed 30 July 2021]. Espineira has published on transgender representation in media, including 'Sésame, ouvre-toi: constituer un corpus audiovisuel pour l'étude des transidentités', in *En quête d'archives: bricolages méthodologiques en terrain médiatiques*, ed. by Sarah Lécossais and Nelly Quemener (Paris: INA Éditions, 2018), <<https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-02079973>> [accessed 30 July 2021]; and *Médiacultures: la transidentité en télévision. Une recherche menée sur un corpus de l'INA (1946–2010)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2015).

<sup>30</sup> Patrick Cardon in 2009 proclaimed: 'Le trans-genre, ce pourrait être le *queer* à la française'; Patrick Cardon, 'Post-queer: pour une "approche trans-genre"', *Diogene*, 225.1 (2009), 177–88 (p. 182).

<sup>31</sup> See for instance Oliver Brett, 'Transgender Migrations: Prostitution, Identity and Notions of "Home" in Contemporary France', *Modern & Contemporary France*, 27.2 (2019), 163–84; Christine Quinan, 'Trans-ing Gender Boundaries and National Borders: Rethinking Identity in Merzak Allouache's *Chouchou* (2003) and Angelina Maccaroni's *Fremde Haut/Unveiled* (2005)', in *Queering the Migrant in Contemporary European Cinema*, ed. by James S. Williams (New York: Routledge, 2020), pp. 47–58; and Jonathan Devine, 'Documenting the Trans\* and Animating the Still in Sébastien Lifshitz's *Bambi?*', *French Screen Studies* (2021), 1–17, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/26438941.2020.1870851>> [accessed 21 June 2021]. I use 'trans\*' here instead of 'transgender' since, in the words of Jack Halberstam, trans\* 'refus[es] to situate transition in relation to a destination, a final form, a specific shape, or an established configuration of desire and identity', the term 'holds off the certainty of diagnosis', and the asterisk in trans\* 'makes trans\* people the authors of their own categorization'; Jack Halberstam, *Trans\*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), p. 4.

studies, older texts are being reread and rediscovered, including Jean Genet's *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs* (1943) and René Gaveau's 1954 film *Adam est... Ève*.<sup>32</sup> In addition, scholars study how trans\* subjects trans cisgender (non-trans) subjects or other entities, in ways not unlike those in which queer subjects queer normative subjects.<sup>33</sup> François Ozon's film *Une nouvelle amie* (2014), to take an example from one of France's most prominent queer filmmakers, has been analysed in relation to transgender representation itself and in relation to how the cisgender main character is transed over the course of the film.<sup>34</sup> Applying the concept of gender dysphoria to cisgender bodies, Mat Fournier's current research on modernist literature asks the compelling question: 'What if gender dysphoria was not the fate of few, but a collective side-effect of the modern gender binary?'<sup>35</sup>

One of the most exciting occurrences in French LGBTQ+ studies has been the growing dialogue between trans studies and premodern texts that predate the medicalized invention of the category of *trans-sexualisme* in the 1950s in France. Thinking in trans terms about texts from before the mid-twentieth century informs the transgender present as much as it teaches us about the pre-*trans-sexualisme* past. Anne Linton's work on nineteenth-century intersex and 'hermaphroditism' considers how literature, law, and medicine relate to the imposition of a stable sex and to sexual fluidity or indeterminacy, as a precursor to medicalized thinking about what will come to be called *transsexualité*.<sup>36</sup> Rachel Mesch's *Before Trans* focuses on three people assigned female at birth: Jane Dieulafof, Rachilde, and Marc de Montifaud. Mesch's readable book is in part about the gendered body, but not as defined medically. Dieulafof, for instance, uses photography to stage 'her embrace of a masculine persona' as a kind of archaeological 'discovery' of masculinity.<sup>37</sup> This representation is compared to 'posttransition images that have become central to modern transgender identity'.<sup>38</sup> But still, textual production remained much more central to gender articulation for

<sup>32</sup> On Genet and trans femininity, see Heaney, 'The Flesh That Would Become Myth: Barnes's Suffering Female Anatomy and the Trans Feminine Example', in *The New Woman*, pp. 99–152. On the film, see Todd W. Reeser, 'Transsexuality and the Production of French Universalism: René Gaveau's *Adam est... Ève* (1954)', *French Review*, 91.2 (2017), 126–38.

<sup>33</sup> For work taking this approach, see for instance Todd W. Reeser, 'Universalising Transgender Representation: Emmanuelle Pagano's *Les Adolescents troglodytes*', *Modern & Contemporary France*, 21.3 (2013), 265–79, and Chantal Zabus, 'Transing the Algerian Nation-State: Textual Transgender and Intersex from Pre-Independence to the Black Decade', *Acta Neophilologica*, 52.1–2 (2019), 69–96.

<sup>34</sup> See Levilson C. Reis, 'Goodbye "Temporary" Transvestites — Hello, New Girlfriend! Ozon's Transgenre and Transgender Crossovers in *Une nouvelle amie* (2014)', *French Screen Studies*, 20.1 (2020), 42–66; and Todd W. Reeser, 'Transing Dynamics: Ozon's *Une nouvelle amie* (2014)', in *ReFocus: The Films of François Ozon*, ed. by Loïc Bourdeau (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), pp. 143–61.

<sup>35</sup> Mat Fournier, personal communication. I would like to record my thanks to Mat Fournier for granting me permission to quote from his email here.

<sup>36</sup> See Anne E. Linton, 'Hermaphrodite Outlaws: Ambiguous Sex and the Civil Code in Nineteenth-Century France', *Representations*, 138.1 (2017), 87–117, and 'Mutating Bodies: Reproductive Surgeries and Popular Fiction in Nineteenth-Century France', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 22.5 (2018), 579–86. Linton's *Unmaking Sex: The Gender Outlaws of Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022) tells the untold story of the medical and literary history of intersex of nineteenth-century France.

<sup>37</sup> Rachel Mesch, *Before Trans: Three Gender Stories from Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020), p. 69.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

these three people, at least based on the evidence available. It is really ‘stories rather than terms and labels’ that define the complicated gender presentations since the three ‘acted as *authors* of their identities over the course of their lives’.<sup>39</sup> One result of the focus on narratives is that a Foucauldian discursive fixing of morphologies does not pertain, even as the three people are in dialogue with broad discursive configurations in their writings. Personal narrative resists hegemonic discourses by virtue of constantly negotiating with them to open up an individual story. The three figures themselves ‘turned to earlier narratives, myths, and histories to work through their own gender stories’.<sup>40</sup> There is a history to trans\* figures in France, but there is also a history of the history of trans\* figures, or of the way trans\* subjects construct their subjectivities in dialogue with trans\* people who lived before them.

Some of the pre-nineteenth-century figures with whom Mesch’s three people were in dialogue are well known to gender scholars today. Early modern texts studied today include, for instance, Montaigne’s anecdotes about Marie Germain in the late sixteenth century, Thomas Artus’s *L’Isle des hermaphrodites* (1605), Isaac de Benserade’s play *Iphis et Ianthe* (1637), the Abbé de Choisy’s seventeenth-century writings, and texts relating to the Chevalier d’Éon in the eighteenth century. Many were widely known before the current century as well: Montaigne’s discussion of Marie Germain, whose ‘membres virils se produisirent’ one day while jumping especially vigorously out in a field, became a touchstone in mid-twentieth-century medical discussions of sex change.<sup>41</sup> But pre-modern categories of bodies do not map onto modern critical categories in any direct manner, and there is frequently a tension between our notion of transgender and pre-modern discursive sites of gender. The Chevalier d’Éon, in particular, creates morphological complications should we try to categorize the person in today’s terms. Marilyn Morris notes that ‘treatment of d’Éon illuminates both the liberating and restricting aspects of “transgender” as a label of identity’.<sup>42</sup> The Middle Ages offers Joan of Arc, saints,

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 288; original emphasis. Mesch notes that sexuality was not really an issue, at least explicitly, since the three people ‘were apparently comfortable in what appeared to be a heterosexual paradigm’ and since ‘there was no point of reference, medical or otherwise, for separating gender and sexuality’ (ibid., p. 23).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 287.

<sup>41</sup> Montaigne, *Les Essais de Michel de Montaigne*, ed. by Pierre Villey (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1978), ‘De la force de l’imagination’, 1, 20, p. 99. See Todd W. Reeser, ‘“Tricheurs de sexe”: Montaigne et le discours de la transidentité au xx<sup>e</sup> siècle’, *Théories critiques et littérature de la Renaissance: mélanges offerts à Lawrence Krutzman*, ed. by Todd W. Reeser and David LaGuardia (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2021), pp. 177–90.

<sup>42</sup> Marilyn Morris, ‘The Chevalière d’Éon, Transgender Autobiography and Identity’, *Gender & History*, 31.1 (2019), 78–90 (p. 78). Questions of translation of Éon also pose issues: see Emily Rose, *Translating Trans Identity: (Re)Writing Undecidable Texts and Bodies* (London: Routledge, 2021). On Montaigne, see Todd W. Reeser, ‘On Gender’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Montaigne*, ed. by Philippe Desan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 562–80. On the ‘genderqueer society’ of *L’Isle des hermaphrodites*, see Kathleen Long, ‘Styling Sedition in *The Island of Hermaphrodites* (*L’Isle des hermaphrodites*, 1605)’, in *Sedition: The Spread of Controversial Literature and Ideas in France and Scotland, c. 1550–1610*, ed. by John O’Brien and Marc Schachter (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), pp. 263–88; and Teodoro Patera, ‘“Un homme à demy”: gender, esthétique et reconnaissance dans *L’Isle des Hermaphrodites*’, *Studi francesi*, 189 (2019), 430–41. On Benserade’s play and the complications of (trans)gender, see Kathleen Perry Long, ‘Illegible Bodies: Reading Intersex and Transgender in Early Modern France (the Case of Isaac de Benserade’s *Iphis et Ianthe*)’, in *Odvidian Transversions: Iphis and Ianthe, 1300–1650*, ed. by Valerie Traub, Patricia Badir, and Peggy McCracken (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), pp. 213–40; Matthieu Dupas, ‘Lesbianism in Benserade’s *Iphis et Ianthe* (1634): Gallantry and the Making of Heterosexuality in Seventeenth-Century France’, in

and literary figures who can be put into dialogue with transgender studies. Alicia Spencer-Hall and Blake Gutt's volume *Trans and Genderqueer Subjects in Medieval Hagiography* does not take 'transgender' as a 'historically transcendent framework, but rather the patterns of thought enabled by trans theory resonate with the content of the texts under consideration, animating the development of productive new readings'.<sup>43</sup> The more work that emerges on pre-modern texts, the more complicated and diffuse gender becomes since the more closely we read and consider them, the more specific and anti-normative gender seems. In pre-modern cases, as Kathleen Long puts it in a round-table on pre-modern transgender studies: 'We are likely to see more in the past, representations and formulations that we could not imagine to be there from within our own framework, richer experiences of trans\* and intersex than we assumed would be there.'<sup>44</sup> There is a trans\* parallel to what Jeffrey Masten has called 'queer philology' in early modern English studies, a way to trans premodern texts by virtue of continuing to read trans phenomena ever more closely. It does not have to be the case that philology or close reading is old, stuffy, and normative, for getting more philological with queer texts can have the effect of proliferating the asterisk in trans\*.

### *Temporality and historicity*

If going back in time and taking complexity seriously can function as a queering mechanism, reconsiderations of how past histories and present affects are in dialogue have the potential to queer time itself. It is not necessary for the historically minded scholar to take past and present as fully discrete phenomena, as the affective hold of the past on the present or affective links to the past can be objects of study or discussion in themselves. A major interest in queer studies in the last fifteen years or so has in fact been to queer time, whether via reconsiderations of these kinds of past–present dialogues or via considerations of how non-normative bodies are excluded by normative notions of time — such as those based on marriage or reproduction, a conventional nine-to-five workday with leisure time afterwards, or optimistic progress across time ('perfectibility'). Queer subjects might experience queer time outside the 'biological clock' or with a night-time, non-normative occupation such as sex work.<sup>45</sup> How then has time been queered in French contexts? Among books in queer studies broadly, Carla Freccero's

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*Ovidian Transversions*, ed. by Traub, Badir, and McCracken, pp. 241–60. For a broad diachronic overview, see Pierre-Olivier Chaumet, *Le Transgenre, une histoire de tous les temps?* (Bordeaux: LEH, 2015).

<sup>43</sup> Alicia Spencer-Hall and Blake Gutt, Introduction to *Trans and Genderqueer Subjects in Medieval Hagiography*, ed. by Spencer-Hall and Gutt (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021), pp. 11–40 (p. 14). On the period, see also Dorothy Kim and M. W. Bychowski, 'Visions of Medieval Trans Feminism: An Introduction', in *Visions of Medieval Trans Feminism*, ed. by Dorothy Kim and M. W. Bychowski (= special issue, *Medieval Feminist Forum*, 55.1 (2019)), pp. 6–41; Clovis Mailet, *Les Genres fluides: de Jeanne d'Arc aux saintes trans* (Paris: Arkhé, 2020); Leah DeVun, *The Shape of Sex: Nonbinary Gender from Genesis to the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021); and *Trans Historical: Gender Plurality before the Modern*, ed. by Greta LaFleur, Masha Raskolnikov, and Anna Klosowska (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021).

<sup>44</sup> Kathleen P. Long, in M. W. Bychowski and others, "'Trans\* Historicities': A Roundtable Discussion", *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 5.4 (2018), 658–85 (p. 681).

<sup>45</sup> For an overview of queer time, see Carolyn Dinshaw and others, 'Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 13.2 (2007), 177–95.

*Queer/Early/Modern* was in on the ground floor of queer studies' temporal turn, taking some Renaissance French texts as case studies (for example, Marguerite de Navarre, Jean de Léry).<sup>46</sup> Scholars can permit themselves to be haunted by pre-modern queerness through a process of what Freccero calls 'queer spectrality', an affective relation by which the focus is on 'porous, permeable pasts and futures [...] that enable us to mourn and also to hope'.<sup>47</sup> For Freccero, 'doing a queer history [...] involves an openness to the possibility of being haunted, even inhabited, by ghosts'.<sup>48</sup> Queer scholars such as myself may have always been saddened or hopeful in teaching and studying queer texts from the past, without giving our affective responses the critical value that they deserved. But scholars now reflect on what it means affectively to return to past texts. Gary Ferguson's study of traces of same-sex marriage in early modern Rome — including a passage in Montaigne's travel journal — concludes with a lyrical chapter ('Ghost Stories') that reflects on what his study of same-sex love and relations means for a scholar working today.<sup>49</sup> In the Introduction to her book on the queer Enlightenment, Tracy Rutler, too, notes that she leaves herself open to pre-modern queerness without having to master it, as a kind of queer methodology for studying a pre-modern period.<sup>50</sup> Queer haunting does not have to mean that synchronic, contextualized readings of pre-modern sexualities will be abandoned, but rather offers one lens among many by which to think the queer past. It could also be a methodology to consider how past queer figures experienced queer representation before them in turn, or how the past is itself haunted by a past one step further in the past.

Yet sometimes ghosts from the queer past get reimagined to construct what we want queerness to be. Kadji Amin in *Disturbing Attachments* is interested not in being haunted or in mourning, but in heading back in time to consider how and why certain queer objects of study become idealized while disturbing elements of the queer past are lost, forgotten, or occluded for reasons that might be political.<sup>51</sup> Focusing on queer icon and mainstay of queer theory, Jean Genet, Amin uses the term 'attachment genealogy' to describe his approach to the past based on an interest in what we do or do not seize upon when looking back. Why have queer scholars become so attached to what might be called Genet's anti-normativity or his queerness, but not to the critical acknowledgement of pederasty as a part of Genet's queer history? Anglophone scholars should pay more attention to how 'only certain forms of nonnormativity, only particular sex acts seem to attach to [queer]'.<sup>52</sup> Amin invites queer scholars to consider how the canon of past queer

<sup>46</sup> Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 69. For questions of 'the queerness of tangency' and its relation to writing in Renaissance France, see Carla Freccero, 'Tangents (of Desire)', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 16.2 (2016), 91–105 (p. 92).

<sup>48</sup> Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern*, p. 80.

<sup>49</sup> Gary Ferguson, *Same-Sex Marriage in Renaissance Rome: Sexuality, Identity, and Community in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), p. 164.

<sup>50</sup> Tracy Rutler, *Queering the Enlightenment: Kinship and Gender in Eighteenth-Century French Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021).

<sup>51</sup> Kadji Amin, *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 183; original emphasis.

figures has been received and how certain past elements ‘must be forgotten, overlooked, or suppressed so that contemporary queer theory can sustain its key critical and political commitments and imaginaries’.<sup>53</sup> We should practise ‘deidealization’, or ‘a form of the reparative that acknowledges messiness and damage’ instead of sanitizing the past.<sup>54</sup> Though Amin’s book takes Genet as case study, it opens up a broader theoretical apparatus by which other queer icons could be reconsidered — as Ian Fleishman has done with André Gide for instance.<sup>55</sup>

Overlooking Genet’s pederasty may well have been a precondition for his status as queer icon today, but overlooking or suppressing pederasty has not always been a way to cleanse queerness. My *Setting Plato Straight* reveals how Renaissance French thinkers and writers either effaced same-sex (usually pederastic) eros when translating or citing Plato, or in some cases reflected on the problematic of that very effacement. The study was meant as a ‘contribution to a twenty-first-century sexual counterdiscourse that reveals how our assumptions about so-called platonic love cover up a series of normative sexual slippages and mutations’.<sup>56</sup> What we call ‘platonic love’ today is far from what Plato would have imagined. Early modern anxieties about pederasty might constitute a form of ‘attachment genealogy’ as well, a Humanist investment in a history of pederasty purified or wiped clean of same-sex sexuality altogether, not in the service of a respectful form of queerness but rather in the service of purified male–female love and relations. After reading Amin’s book, I was left to wonder if the very idea of attachment genealogy with respect to pederasty is invented by the early modern writers that I had studied. Have queer scholars pushed aside Genet’s pederasty in part because we were prompted to do so, long ago, by those who received ancient pederasty as so problematic? Is there a genealogy of attachment genealogy?

It is not just the relation to past time that can be — or may need to be — queered, but the experience of time on a daily basis or over the lifespan. Queer studies challenges the ways in which time and temporality construct stable-seeming normativities since, as Elizabeth Freeman writes, ‘Time [...] is not only of the essence, it actually produces “essences”’.<sup>57</sup> Queerness might be out of joint because it is out of (normative) time, a topic taken up scholars such as Jack Halberstam in *In a Queer Time and Place*.<sup>58</sup> The genealogical, reproductive movement from one generation to the next is made possible by the hegemony of heterosexual kinship and what Lee Edelman in *No Future* calls ‘reproductive futurism’, which codes the child as the ultimate image of futurity.<sup>59</sup> Studies of queer

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>55</sup> Ian Fleishman, ‘Pederasty and/as Narrative Form: André Gide’s Queer Coinages’, *French Forum*, 45.2 (2020), 155–69. Along vaguely similar lines (modern relations to (queer) Catholic martyrs), see Jason James Hartford, *Sexuality, Iconography, and Fiction in French: Queering the Martyr* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

<sup>56</sup> Todd W. Reeser, *Setting Plato Straight: Translating Ancient Sexuality in the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. ix.

<sup>57</sup> Elizabeth Freeman, Introduction to *Queer Temporalities*, ed. by Elizabeth Freeman (= special issue, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 13.2–3 (2007)), pp. 159–76 (p. 160).

<sup>58</sup> Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: NYU Press, 2005).

<sup>59</sup> Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 2.

time have been undertaken with respect to writers such as Charles Perrault and Marcel Proust.<sup>60</sup> As regards the former, Louis Seifert argues that ‘the queer temporalities of “Sleeping Beauty” not only block the progression toward the [happily ever after] but also deny the princess the enduring pleasures a reproductive future is supposed to guarantee’.<sup>61</sup> In *Queering the Enlightenment*, Rutler considers how ‘scenes of disjunction, confusion, even discomfort open the space for authors to seize upon a utopian impulse to challenge the status quo of patriarchal politics by proposing radical forms of kinship’.<sup>62</sup> Her corpus from the 1730s and 1740s asks ‘readers to follow a utopian impulse to *recreate* — rather than *procreate* — a society of equals’.<sup>63</sup> Edelman’s reproductive futurism does not dominate the period when authors expand what ‘intimate communities’ mean.<sup>64</sup>

In other cases, queer characters or figures do not so much fall outside a normative sex/gender system, but come to form part of a non-linear or ‘rhizomatic’ structure of family trees. Blake Gutt has made this argument in a medieval context, focusing on *Tristan de Nanteuil, a chanson de geste*.<sup>65</sup> Gutt argues that ‘transgender genealogy in *Tristan de Nanteuil* contradicts the model of queerness proposed by queer theory’s antisocial turn’, keeping transgender in its fold instead of rejecting that which disrupts the normative fabric of gender and sexuality.<sup>66</sup> It is not that transgender phenomena are anti-systemic or disruptive, but that ‘certain conceptual systems are inadequate to their comprehension’, meaning that they have the potential to be reconceived.<sup>67</sup>

One question that must be asked around pre-modern queer time is: if temporal normativity has not always existed historically in the first place, then can we even talk about queer time? In periods when clocks did not have the influence that they do today and time was not so much everyone’s master, there might be something inherently queer or at least fluid about time in the first place. Jennifer Eun-Jung Row’s innovative study of time in early modern theatre takes up this issue: ‘We cannot [. . .] assume the position of antinormativity without taking into account the churning process underfoot to render temporality “normative” in the first

<sup>60</sup> Lewis C. Seifert, ‘Queer Time in Charles Perrault’s “Sleeping Beauty”’, *Marvels & Tales*, 29.1 (2015), 21–41. On Proust, see Adeline Soldin, ‘No Future for Mlle de Saint-Loup? Queer Temporality and Histories in *A la recherche du temps perdu*’, *The French Review*, 93.4 (2020), 45–59. In a medieval context, see Victoria Turner, ‘Medieval Expiration Dating? Queer Time and Spatial Dislocation in *Aucassin and Nicolette*’, in *Reconsidering Gender, Time and Memory in Medieval Culture*, ed. by Elizabeth Cox, Liz Herbert McAvoy, and Roberta Magnani (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015), pp. 29–44; Maud McInerney, ‘Queer Time for Heroes in the *Roman d’Enés* and the *Roman de Traïe*’, in *Medieval Futurity: Essays for the Future of a Queer Medieval Studies*, ed. by Will Rogers and Christopher Michael Roman (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2020), pp. 107–28.

<sup>61</sup> Seifert, ‘Queer Time in Charles Perrault’s “Sleeping Beauty”’, p. 38.

<sup>62</sup> Rutler, *Queering the Enlightenment*, p. 7.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>64</sup> On the related topic of queer heterosexuality, Maxime Foerster studies what he calls ‘heterosexual trouble’: ‘a heuristic tool that exposes the inconsistency of sexual difference and the array of afflictions and exploitations generated by heteronormativity’; Maxime Foerster, *The Politics of Love: Queer Heterosexuality in Nineteenth-Century French Literature* (Lebanon: University of New Hampshire Press, 2018), p. 40. At moments, his texts do resist ‘reproductive futurism’ (for example, p. 129).

<sup>65</sup> Blake Gutt, ‘Transgender Genealogy in *Tristan de Nanteuil*’, *Exemplaria*, 30.2 (2018), 129–46.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

place.<sup>68</sup> But, for Row, the lack of stable normativity in the realm of time does not simply mean that queer time cannot exist, but that temporal relations are complex: ‘nonconforming velocities in neoclassical drama challenge the increasingly normative temporality underfoot as well as generating surprising affects and erotics through the very feeling of time’, and “‘queer” can [. . .] be located in the incoherencies between normative and deviant erotics’.<sup>69</sup>

Characters or figures do not have to act out of normative time to think in queer terms, for time itself can be coded as queer. In *The Sexuality of History*, Susan Lanser delineates ways in which pre-modern Sapphism came to embody the concept of modernity in western Europe, including in France, because Sapphism was taken as so disruptive of tradition and as forward-looking.<sup>70</sup> It is not just the case that scholars can do the history of sexuality queerly or that characters can speak to us today queerly, for history ‘has’ a sexuality that might be represented by queer figures. Lanser describes her interests thus: ‘I am concerned less with asking how early modern Europe configured the sapphic than with asking how the sapphic configured early modern Europe.’<sup>71</sup> Lanser’s book helps us to understand ways in which pre-modern queerness might be taken as a form of futurity, well before queer studies began to think about queer futurity, and an avenue for thinking about how queer figures can configure or embody time itself.

### *Queering queer theory: francophone Africa*

While the work in LGBTQ+ studies that I have discussed so far is almost entirely focused on white, European subjects, recent work on francophone Africa opens up new approaches in queer studies that challenge or reconfigure the whiteness of queer studies. Introducing a recent issue of *GLQ* on queer Africa, the editors aim to consider ‘how queer theory elaborated from Africa can inform queer theory’s Euro-American silent ethnocentrism’.<sup>72</sup> While this particular volume does not focus on francophone postcolonial Africa, queer texts in French from the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa can contribute substantially to reconsiderations of western queer studies. How then can ‘queer’ and ‘African’ be thought together in French and francophone studies? Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi prefers not to refer to ‘African queer studies’ or ‘queer African studies’, but ‘African queer scholarship’, to keep queer and African studies from appearing as ‘contested fields’ and to avoid ‘the very dominance of the social and medical sciences and the marginalization of literary and film studies, public discourse analysis, and even law within that field’.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Jennifer Eun-Jung Row, ‘Queer Time on the Early Modern Stage: France and the Drama of Biopower’, *Exemplaria*, 29.1 (2017), 58–81 (p. 78). This article constitutes part of Row’s forthcoming *Queer Velocities: Time, Sex and Biopower on the Early Modern Stage* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2022).

<sup>69</sup> Row, ‘Queer Time on the Early Modern Stage’, p. 61.

<sup>70</sup> Susan S. Lanser, *The Sexuality of History: Modernity and the Sapphic, 1565–1830* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3. Another important book on same-sex female love is Gretchen Schultz, *Sapphic Fathers: Discourses of Same-Sex Desire from Nineteenth-Century France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

<sup>72</sup> Kirk Fiereck, Neville Hoad, and Danai S. Mupotsa, ‘A Queering-to-Come’, in *Time Out of Joint: The Queer and the Customary in Africa*, ed. by Kirk Fiereck, Neville Hoad, and Danai S. Mupotsa (= special issue, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 26.3 (2020)), pp. 363–76 (p. 364).

The problem of the imposition or influence of western sexual epistemologies subtends much recent work on francophone Africa. Western categories of sexuality such as ‘homosexual’ came into being in ways that Foucault has famously discussed in volume 1 of *The History of Sexuality* and were brought to Africa through colonization, but there may also be vestiges of sexual categories that white westerners left behind or still attempt to impose — perhaps partially or temporarily — in a postcolonial world.

If categories such as ‘homosexual’ and ‘heterosexual’ are too western to be used uncritically for African contexts, then what about ‘queer’? Prolific scholar Gibson Ncube employs the phrase ‘sexualité marginale’ in an important book on queer Maghrebi literature ‘[a]fin d’éviter l’emploi des notions purement occidentales pour décrire un phénomène qui se réfère au monde arabo-musulman’.<sup>74</sup> Still, because the term ‘queer’ can function as a hermeneutic or critical posture, not an identity, and not necessarily through certain types of body or desires, it remains widely used in scholarship, despite its western origin. C. L. Quinan describes ‘queer postcoloniality as [. . .] the desire to open texts up to readings that do not assume any disaggregation of postcolonialism from queerness’.<sup>75</sup> In *Queer Roots for the Diaspora*, Jarrod Hayes queers roots and the heteronormativity and exclusions that tend to accompany them in African, Caribbean, Maghrebi, and other texts and contexts, and along the way articulates how ‘the roots of the African diaspora are indeed always already queer’ in African texts and also how ‘Créoliste fiction [. . .] may be read as queering [African roots]’.<sup>76</sup> Hayes’s book about origins points to a critical approach suggested by Jean Zaganianis, namely to make sense of the ‘idiomes utilisés’ rather than to apply western queer theory to African texts or to use its queer studies lingo.<sup>77</sup>

One way to avoid the issue of reifying the imposition of western categories of sexuality on African texts is to take the position that queerness does not so much ‘come from’ somewhere, but — borrowing from Deleuze — is a kind of ‘assemblage’ or combination of complicated cultural factors at play which might include gender, affect, sexuality, space, or power. Similarly, Zaganianis sees the need for ‘une prise en compte effective des pluralités, des hybridités, des métissages, des ambivalences identitaires du monde arabe’.<sup>78</sup> There may be no need or reason to focus on where categories of sexuality come from in the first place, and

<sup>73</sup> Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi, ‘Introduction: Denormalizing Imperatives in African Queer Scholarship’, *College Literature*, 45.4 (2018), 596–612 (p. 599). Osinubi notes that the phrasing is borrowed from Stella Nyanzi; see Stella Nyanzi, ‘Knowledge Is Requisite Power: Making a Case for Queer African Scholarship’, in *Boldly Queer: African Perspectives on Same-Sex Sexuality and Gender Diversity*, ed. by Theo Sandfort and others (The Hague: Hivos, 2015), pp. 125–35.

<sup>74</sup> Gibson Ncube, *La Sexualité queer au Maghreb à travers la littérature* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2018), p. 7.

<sup>75</sup> C. L. Quinan, *Hybrid Anxieties: Queering the French–Algerian War and Its Postcolonial Legacies* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020), p. 9.

<sup>76</sup> Hayes, *Queer Roots for the Diaspora*, pp. 121, 76.

<sup>77</sup> Jean Zaganianis, *Queer Maroc: sexualités, genres et (trans)identités dans la littérature marocaine* (Paris: Des ailes sur un tracteur, 2013), p. 284.

<sup>78</sup> Zaganianis, *Queer Maroc*, p. 10. See also Quinan, *Hybrid Anxieties*, pp. 15–19.

considerations of how (post)colonialism and queerness relate do not necessarily have to be forgotten, but also do not have to be the central object of enquiry.

Recent work on queer African film has taken this approach to heart. Ayo Coly's article on Senegalese director Joseph Gai Ramaka's film *Karmen Gëi* (2001) analyses 'postcolonial queerness' in the film not as 'an identity location but rather a modality of postcolonial power relations'.<sup>79</sup> This approach means that 'queerness in the postcolony does not predate or outlive its enunciation'.<sup>80</sup> Kwame Edwin Otu's reading of Mohamed Camara's *Dakan* (1997), sometimes taken as the first sub-Saharan African film about homosexuality, argues for the failure of heterosexual normativity but not as a European-inflected gay liberation; Otu reads 'heteroerotic failure' as revealing 'the invincibility of heterosexual norms in postcolonial Guinea, a former colony of France' but then offering 'homoerotic/queer possibilities that these hegemonic norms suppress'.<sup>81</sup> The film thus 'anticipates an afro-queer future in which queer subjects become palpable'.<sup>82</sup> In critical terms, Coly's and Otu's innovative readings mix Anglo-American queer studies (Sara Ahmed, Jack Halberstam, Jasbir Puar) and African thinkers (Kwame Gyekye, Achille Mbembe), creating a kind of theoretical assemblage of their own that can serve as models for future work.

James S. Williams's *Ethics and Aesthetics in Contemporary African Cinema* includes a chapter ('Queering the Baobab') on films (including by the directors noted above), in which queerness is unambiguous, even if its meaning is open to interpretation. Williams opens up film studies by discussing 'the possibility of a dispersive queer gaze in contemporary African cinema' and 'prob[ing] the queer creases of those determinedly heterosexual national narratives where sexuality remains generally understated [...] for odd signs, chance flickerings, intimations, vibrations and reverberations of male beauty and intimacy, even homoeroticism, that might lie hidden or disguised under the radar'.<sup>83</sup> The goal is not simply to locate same-sex acts and erotic encounters, but to consider 'the intrinsic homoeroticism of form' in cinema.<sup>84</sup> While it is too early to declare a new 'Queer African Cinema', Williams notes, 'the desire for more liberating forms of masculinity, and new, propitious modes of male intimacy, is irresistibly gaining ground'.<sup>85</sup>

Another hybrid approach to sexualities between Europe and Africa is represented by Luis Navarro-Ayala's *Queering Transcultural Encounters*. While 'homosexuality' does not have to resemble the French category of sexuality, it is

<sup>79</sup> Ayo A. Coly, 'Carmen Goes Postcolonial, Carmen Goes Queer: Thinking the Postcolonial as Queer', *Culture, Theory and Critique*, 57.3 (2016), 391–407 (p. 395). For this approach in literature, see for instance Naminata Diabate, 'Genealogies of Desire, Extravagance, and Radical Queerness in Frieda Ekotto's *Chubote pas trop!*', *Research in African Literatures*, 47.2 (2016), 46–65.

<sup>80</sup> Coly, 'Carmen Goes Postcolonial', p. 395.

<sup>81</sup> Kwame Edwin Otu, 'Heteroerotic Failure and "Afro-queer Futurity" in Mohamed Camara's *Dakan*', *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 33.1 (2021), 10–25 (p. 11). On the film, see also Karl Schoonover and Rosalind Galt, *Queer Cinema in the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), pp. 132–40.

<sup>82</sup> Otu, 'Heteroerotic Failure and "Afro-queer Futurity"', p. 24.

<sup>83</sup> James S. Williams, *Ethics and Aesthetics in Contemporary African Cinema: The Politics of Beauty* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), p. 187.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

still the case that queerness might be constructed in dialogue with Frenchness: ‘the concept of Frenchness plays a significant role in the construction of a queer identity in both Latin America and North Africa’.<sup>86</sup> ‘Frenchness has [...] come to represent an imagined queer space enabling sexual explorations in North Africa today’, but the identification is not simply static: ‘queer subjects [...] find ways to create transversal dialogues inclusive of racial, cultural, age, and sexual specificities, as well as to discover new modes of social engagement’.<sup>87</sup> Because queer identity formation does tend to be in dialogue with multiple cultural contexts, calls have been made for more interregional dialogues. Ncube writes: ‘beyond the regional specificities that are evident in African queer scholarship, there is need to develop inter-regional and intra-continental as well as trans-continental dialogue’.<sup>88</sup> Ncube also notes the dominance of queer work on South Africa and the need to put the Maghreb into productive dialogue with other parts of Africa.

Navarro-Ayala conducts readings of Rachid O., whose writings have been seminal in queer Maghrebi studies, but undoubtedly it is the œuvre of Abdellah Taïa that has inspired the most critical energy in recent years.<sup>89</sup> This interest might be linked to his status as the first ‘out’ Moroccan writer, his high cultural profile in France, his artistic depictions of cultural mixture, or the variety of his corpus (fiction, essays, one film, and a forthcoming co-authored play). Tina Dransfeldt Christensen argues that his ‘narrations of the “self-absorbed” [are] a site of queer commitment’, particularly when taken in dialogue with previous literary texts.<sup>90</sup> One reason that academics may be so taken with Taïa’s work is that it transforms notions of queerness in non-Maghrebi contexts, opening up French or western ideas on queerness. Though the author himself identifies as gay, his work dismantles western heterosexual/homosexual definitions, renegotiating as well as queering them, while not leaving aside same-sex desire or acts. To take just one example of this re-inscription of queer, Ryan K. Schroth argues that Taïa’s 2017 novel *Celui qui est digne d’être aimé* employs and rewrites the affect of shame, ‘countering Maghrebian and European systems of normalisation, especially forms of heteronormativity and homonormativity’.<sup>91</sup> This model of shame would offer an

<sup>86</sup> Luis Navarro-Ayala, *Queering Transcultural Encounters: Bodies, Image, and Frenchness in Latin America and North Africa* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 1.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>88</sup> Gibson Ncube, ‘Renegotiating the Marginality of the Maghreb in Queer African Studies’, *College Literature*, 45.4 (2018), 623–31 (p. 629). See also Ncube’s interest in a ‘navette, réelle ou imaginaire, entre les deux rives de la Méditerranée’, *La Sexualité queer au Maghreb*, p. 26.

<sup>89</sup> Domingo Pujante González makes a similar remark in ‘Désir et sexualités non normatives au Maghreb et dans la diaspora’, *Expressions maghrébines*, 16.1 (2017), 1–19 (p. 17). Taïa’s work figures in Zaganianis, *Queer Maroc*, and Ncube, *La Sexualité queer au Maghreb*. Recent books on Taïa include Jean-Pierre Boulé, *Abdellah Taïa, la mélancolie et le cri* (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 2020), and Tina Dransfeldt Christensen, *Writing Queer Identities in Morocco: Abdellah Taïa and Moroccan Committed Literature* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2021). Edited volumes include: *Abdellah Taïa: Moroccan, gay et musulman. Avec un entretien d’Abdellah Taïa et Hassan Jarfi*, ed. by Florentin Chif-Moncousin and Jean Leclercq (Louvain-la-Neuve: Presses universitaires de Louvain, 2020); *Autour d’Abdellah Taïa: poétique et politique du désir engagé*, ed. by Ralph Heyndels and Amine Zidouh (Caen: Passage(s), 2021); *Abdellah Taïa’s Queer Migrations: Non-Places, Affect, and Temporalities*, ed. by Denis M. Provencher and Siham Bouamer (Washington, DC: Lexington Books, 2021).

<sup>90</sup> Dransfeldt Christensen, *Writing Queer Identities in Morocco*, p. xi.

<sup>91</sup> Ryan K. Schroth, ‘Queer Shame: Affect, Resistance, and Colonial Critique in Abdellah Taïa’s *Celui qui est digne d’être aimé*’, *Journal of North African Studies*, 26.1 (2021), 138–62 (p. 139).

alternative affective regime, beyond, for instance, a western model of ‘Gay Pride’ that takes place in reaction against homophobic shame. Instead, it would work on its own terms outside negative affects, offering a new queer ‘idiom’ outside homonormative understandings of shame. For Taïa, shame is not a widespread definitional element of ‘gay’ identity.

Work in this vein challenges the western foundations of queer theory, and queer studies more broadly, as scholars can articulate how queerness functions in non-western texts and contexts: as Hayes put it in his groundbreaking book *Queer Nations*, Maghrebi texts can ‘cast a critical gaze back on the West’ and westerners can ‘in turn, be queered by them’.<sup>92</sup> William J. Spurlin embraces the complications of textual subjectivity in Rachid O., Abdellah Taïa, and Nina Bouraoui, who offer ‘new possibilities of meaning and expression to name their lived experience of sexual alterity — a form of (queer) translational praxis that destabilizes received gender/sexual categories *both* within the Maghreb *and* in Europe’.<sup>93</sup>

This notion of queering queer theory pertains to Franco-Maghrebi texts and contexts as well. Two major books published in 2017, Denis M. Provencher’s *Queer Maghrebi French* and Mehammed Amadeus Mack’s *Sexagon*, both rethink French ‘homonormativity’ in Muslim and Maghrebi contexts, in essence queering normative queerness.<sup>94</sup> Mack studies ‘the way that Franco-Arab and *banlieusard* sexual subcultures may exist in opposition to mainstream understandings of homosexual emancipation as well as queer theory’s first wave’.<sup>95</sup> For Mack, homonormativity has the effect of marginalizing these subcultures, ‘to stave off the threat of change that a serious consideration of Muslims’ sexual subcultures would effect in the homosexual mainstream’.<sup>96</sup> Mack and Provencher are both interested in how ‘the closet’ and ‘coming out’, as normative ideas and practices, are rejected, negotiated, or rewritten. Provencher rethinks western queer temporality, too, as the ‘stories [of the queer Maghrebi subjects] reflect a variety of temporal-spatial references that are not often linear in manner’.<sup>97</sup>

Provencher and Mack both contribute to broadening the textual and anthropological queer hexagonal archive beyond whiteness. In queer Maghrebi studies, Ncube calls attention to the problem of the insufficient archive, noting that there is ‘une insuffisance d’études scientifiques et universitaires sur le rôle des productions culturelles (littérature, films, musique) dans la création d’une archive de la sexualité queer au Maghreb’.<sup>98</sup> Queer films by directors such as Nadir Moknèche,

<sup>92</sup> Jarrod Hayes, *Queer Nations: Marginal Sexualities in the Maghreb* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 20.

<sup>93</sup> William J. Spurlin, ‘Contested Borders: Cultural Translation and Queer Politics in Contemporary Francophone Writing from the Maghreb’, *Research in African Literatures*, 47.2 (2016), 104–20 (p. 104); original emphasis.

<sup>94</sup> Denis M. Provencher, *Queer Maghrebi French: Language, Temporalities, Transfiliations* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 2017); Mehammed Amadeus Mack, *Sexagon: Muslims, France, and the Sexualization of National Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), p. 14.

<sup>95</sup> Mack, *Sexagon*, p. 14.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>97</sup> Provencher, *Queer Maghrebi French*, p. 37.

<sup>98</sup> Ncube, *La Sexualité queer au Maghreb*, p. 106. For a literary archive, see Chantal Zabus, ‘Outing Africa: On Sexualities, Gender, and Transgender in African Literatures’, in *A Companion to African Literatures*, ed. by Olakunle

Amal Bedjaoui, and Taïa are a key element of the current archive.<sup>99</sup> Alongside the critical interest in Taïa and Franco-Algerian novelist Nina Bouraoui, scholars like Hayes, Ncube, and Zaganiaris are contributing to expanding the queer African or Franco-Maghrebi archive. Julin Everett's *Le Queer impérial*, like Ncube's book, creates a de facto literary archive of colonial and postcolonial texts in which male homoeroticism is implied or explicit.<sup>100</sup> The book treats homoerotics between white Europeans and black Africans in texts written by white and black authors, including in cases in which violence and eroticism cannot be easily disassociated. Focused on sexuality and eroticism, Everett's study 'considers how colonial and postcolonial francophone discourses allow us to understand both race and male homoerotic desire as underpinning the imperial projects of France and Belgium'.<sup>101</sup> With erotic relations between Frenchmen and Maghrebi men comparatively well studied, Everett's book fills a large gap in queer scholarship. Patrick Awondo's groundbreaking monograph on homosexuality in Cameroon also aims to open up the sub-Saharan archive, largely around cultural practice.<sup>102</sup> As the archive of queer African scholarship continues to develop, queer studies will undoubtedly continue to get queered, promising even more exciting work in the years to come.

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George (Chichester: Wiley, 2021), pp. 381–98, and Jarrod Hayes, 'Queer Desire on the Move: Resistance to Homoglobalization in World Literature in French', in *Francophone Literature as World Literature*, ed. by Christian Moraru, Nicole Simek, and Bertrand Westphal (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), pp. 180–93.

<sup>99</sup> See for instance Kaya Davies Hayon, 'Queer Desires in the Maghreb and France', in *Sensuous Cinema: The Body in Contemporary Maghrebi Film* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), pp. 125–58; Lowry Martin, 'Defiant Deviance and Franco-Moroccan Cinema's Queer Representations of Masculinity', *Journal of Bodies, Sexualities, and Masculinities*, 1.1 (2020), 80–103; and Gibson Ncube, 'Skin and Silence in Selected Maghrebien Queer Films', *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 33.1 (2021), 51–66. Taïa's film *Salvation Army* (2013) looms large in queer film studies.

<sup>100</sup> Julin Everett, *Le Queer impérial: Male Homoerotic Desire in Francophone Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Leiden: Brill Rodopi, 2018).

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>102</sup> Patrick Awondo, *Le Sexe et ses doubles: (homo)sexualités en postcolonie* (Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2019).