

Postcolonial Narrations Forum 2023: Queering Postcolonial Worlds

In *Queer Phenomenology* (2006), Sara Ahmed explores racial and sexual orientations in the world, writing “Queer orientations are those that put within reach bodies that have been made unreachable by the lines of conventional genealogy. Queer orientations might be those that don’t line up, which by seeing the world ‘slantwise’ allow other objects to come into view” (107). To queer – to disrupt hegemonic practices – and to be queer, then, are ways of orienting oneself “slantwise” or “obliquely” within a larger frame of heteronormativity and white supremacy. Looking at how orientations allow us to situate ourselves in the world, we can begin to challenge how ostensibly postcolonial worlds intersect with queer subjectivities and the plurality of queer experiences. Such intersections are also spaces where the terminology of “postcolonial” may be problematized, challenged, reformulated, or discarded. Related yet distinct theoretical approaches such as decolonial, anticolonial, Indigenous methods of knowing, and other critical theoretical shifts highlight and problematize the Western genealogy of “postcoloniality.” Can these methods be read as ways of queering and of disrupting postcolonial worlds?

In order to engage with this topic, we propose to organize the 2023 Postcolonial Narrations Forum under the title “Queering Postcolonial Worlds.” The main objective of the conference is to probe and interrogate the overlaps and intersections between queer studies and postcolonial studies while maintaining a critical approach to disciplinary boundaries and their assumptions and limitations. In so doing, we establish continuities to the 2022 conference’s focus on “Postcolonial Matters of Life and Death” in productive ways. As Eng and Puar argue with regard to queer theory, there is a need to continue “debates about which materialities matter and how they matter under biopolitical regimes of discipline and control” (2020, 4). This includes thinking about the mortality, livability, and grievability, particularly of queer subjects throughout the world who have been affected by colonization. Here, questions of how to rethink queer studies in relation to decoloniality and how to queer postcolonial studies come together. Queer studies/western queer theory are not exempt from (re)producing exclusions that uphold “a normative queer liberal rights project” (Eng and Puar 3) and remain within the frame of the nation-state in their pursuance of rights and representation. Instead, Fatima El-Tayeb posits “queering” as a means of resisting the framework of the nation-state when she writes of “queering and destabilizing the exclusionary fictive European ethnicity” (*European Others*, xiii). Furthermore, queering postcolonial studies might allow for a rigorous critique and renegotiation of the discipline, addressing tensions between postcolonial theory and Indigenous studies as well as between postcolonial studies and decoloniality and decolonization. Taking inspiration from Qwo-Li Driskill et al.’s question “What does a queer decolonization of our homelands, bodies and psyches look like?” (219), we propose to explore the “center” and “periphery” of queer studies as well as the representation of queer subjectivities in cultural production.

We welcome papers both on and beyond the following topics:

- Predominant whiteness and Europeanness in western queer theory
- The interrelation of white supremacy, capitalism, and heteronormativity
- The heteronormativity of the settler colonial state

- The queer decolonial body and decolonial understandings of “queering”
- Life, death, and grievability
- Queer optimism and pessimism
- Queering power structures in the postcolonial world
- Representations of the gender non-conforming and trans* postcolonial body and consciousness in film, literature, and other media
- Religious hegemony and the vilification of queerness in the postcolonial world
- The erasure of Indigenous and Black queer epistemologies
- The aesthetics of queer Black and Indigenous resistance and survivance
- Two-Spirit epistemologies and the “sovereign erotic”
- Queer practices of worldmaking
- Queer Black and Indigenous Futurisms
- Intersections of queer and postcolonial in the digital space

Interested postgraduate students are encouraged to send abstracts for 20-minute-long presentations (ca. 300 words + 5 keywords) and a short bio note (ca. 100-150 words) to postcolonialnarrations@g-a-p-s.net **by June 30, 2023**. We will send out acceptance emails and further info by mid-July.

The conference, organized by Corina Wieser-Cox (Bremen), Oluwadunni Talabi (Bremen), Rita Maricocchi (Münster), and Dorit Neumann (Münster), is planned to be held in person in Bremen, following current COVID regulations, on **October 6th & 7th, 2023**. Single events or panels may be held in a hybrid form. In case the circumstances change, the format might switch to an online event. The conference will include a keynote-workshop by **Prof. Dr. Shola Adenekan (Ghent University)** and a panel on the topic: **Cultivating Solidarity Networks in Academia**.

Additionally, we are planning to publish select conference papers specifically pertaining to queer Indigenous and Black literatures and texts produced in the Americas, i.e., Turtle Island, Mesoamerica, Abya Yala in a special issue of the online journal *AmLit – American Literatures*. If you are interested in contributing your paper to the issue, please prepare to have a first draft (ca. 6000-8000 words) ready for submission by Nov. 15, 2023. We are currently exploring options for a second publication opportunity that would cater to conference papers relating to topics beyond the American Studies context.

Works Cited

- Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Duke UP, 2006.
- Driskill, Qwo-Li, et al., editors. *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature*. U of Arizona P, 2011.
- El-Tayeb, Fatima. *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*. U of Minnesota P, 2011.
- Eng, David L. and Jasbir K. Puar. “Introduction: Left of Queer.” *Social Text* 145, vol. 38, no. 4, Duke UP, 2020.

<https://postcolonial-narrations.net/>