

Kim Brooks and Robert Leckey, eds. *Queer Theory: Law, Culture, Empire*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2010, 222 p.

Robert Leckey and Kim Brooks' edited volume *Queer Theory: Law, Culture, Empire* is a timely and theoretically valuable collection that challenges readers to reconsider queer theory in light of its relationship to Western hegemony. Grounded in a decidedly interdisciplinary foundation, this collection highlights the critical usefulness of linking queer theory, material conditions, and socio-legal applications. However, in an interesting turn away from complacent understandings of queer theory's always-already innocence, the book's introduction exposes historical power structures found within this movement while establishing the importance of linking theory with practice. More specifically, the editors insist that we must recognize the ways in which queer theory has become (at times) a neo-liberal/neo-colonialist project that effectively reproduces and privileges certain queered-subject identities, thereby creating its own set of sexual *others* within a Western, queer frame. The remaining essays continue this line of interrogation from four thematic vantage points: Constitution, Representation, Regulation, and Exclusion.

Part 1, "Constitution," highlights the ways in which Western understandings of both "queer" and "queer theory" have been imposed uniformly on all non-normative sexualities, regardless of material, historical, and geographical differences. In "Queer Theory, Neoliberalism and Urban Governance," Jon Binnie questions the role of economic and political material conditions in the production of sexualities, asking us to consider whether subscription to Western, neo-liberal models of economic prosperity allow for (or create?) certain queered-sexualities while occluding others. In conjunction with the editors' critique of queer theory's hegemonic influence, Ratna Kapur closes Part 1 by de-centring queer theory through a postcolonial reading of sexuality. In doing so, Kapur makes room for the "sexual subaltern subject" to emerge in postcolonial India while also demonstrating how engagements with the law have sometimes mitigated the sexual subaltern's radical impact.

"Representation" focuses on performativity and empire; here the contributors carefully situate their arguments in specific contexts while still recognizing the wide-reaching influence of colonialism's past and present. Shohini Ghosh discusses the archive of sexualities present in Bollywood cinema, specifically addressing how the implied eroticism of ordinary interactions allows for a re-reading of queer potentiality. Providing *Queer Theory: Law, Culture, Empire's* cover image, Jaco Barnard-Naudé reads the art installation "Butcher Boys" by Jane Alexander as an illustration of apartheid's negative impact. Theorizing this piece in conjunction with Jacques Derrida's discussion of politics as founded in friendship and fraternity, Barnard-Naudé works toward directly implicating the sexual with the formation of Western-style politics and thought. Closing this section, Leslie Moran analyses how sexuality is both visible and invisible in Australia's judiciary system, specifically looking at swearing-in ceremony speeches.

Part 3, "Regulation," makes the clearest case for interrogating the use of queer theory and questioning its widespread application with respect to understandings of transparency, imperialist projects, and homo-nationalist subscriptions. Jenni Millbank's chapter begins Part 3 with an attempt to reconcile the divisions between same-sex and opposite-sex relationships through a discussion of reproductive rights and freedoms. In this unlikely alliance (in which both groups are envisioned as "reproductive outsiders"—same-sex couples because they do not subscribe to heteronormative ideals; opposite-sex couples because of the heteronormative "failure" that is read through their use of reproductive technologies) there emerges the possibility of countering dominant narratives around sexual relationships, families, and reproduction. Jeffrey A. Redding finds "queerness" and alliance in perhaps one of the least likely groups—the religious opposition in the contemporary same-sex marriage debates. Calling for recognition of the legislative attempts by various religious groups in advocating for "alternatives to majoritarian marriage" (p. 124)—specifically, religious movements campaigning for the recognition of plural marriages—Redding proposes a radical re-visioning of the current same-sex marriage debates in the United States, one that moves away from hegemonic understandings of partnership. Finally, Margaret Denike articulates a queer-potentiality within North American polygamy debates, deeply implicating anti-polygamy/anti-queer sentiments within a larger understanding of racist and colonial roots and ideals.

In closing the collection, "Exclusion" draws our attention to the importance of recognizing the relationships among queerness, theory, law, and the construction of empire through discussions of what constitutes "belonging." Nicholas Bamforth interrogates the idea that using comparative or international law arguments with respect to LGBTQ rights is an imperialist project, since such discourses are heavily localized and there is an uneven flow of information from the West. Similarly, Nan Seuffert understands empire building and imperialism in conversation with same-sex marriage laws and immigration in New Zealand, and provocatively uses "coming out" narratives to critique broader civil rights. Finally, Ruthann Robson's chapter, titled "Unsettled," compels readers to confront their own complicity in the imperialism of queer theory. Who is the intended audience of queer theory? How are we situated in this history? How are we responsible? Tying all the sections of this volume together—"Constitution," "Representation," "Regulation," and "Exclusion"—Robson's performative essay on feelings of location, space, time, and settlements as articulated through a historical understanding of colonialism, racism, sexism, and homophobia brings those of us invested in critical engagements with queer and postcolonial theory and law to an introspective ending.

While the wide scope of the topics addressed by different chapters sometimes creates a sense of disconnect between analyses, Leckey and Brooks succeed in weaving together the larger narrative of queer theory's position within discussions of law, culture, and imperialism/empire through 11 uniquely driven arguments. At varying points in this collection, but

nowhere better illustrated than the concluding chapter, readers are asked to question their positions, recognize their historical constructs, and come to terms with their complicity in systems that champion “equality” and “tolerance” but nonetheless work to marginalize many. While the book compels an unsettling self-interrogation, this is a valuable and pertinent piece of work that promotes a rewarding journey from beginning to end.

Sasha Cocarla
PhD Candidate
Institute of Women’s Studies
University of Ottawa
Ottawa, ON