

EPISTEMEMISSION (s)eX in the (t)eX(t)

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Prologue

I AM THE ONE YOU SPEAK, the paradigmatic white, male, westerner. A residue of the colonial era, I represent a broken, nostalgic kingdom. I know the landscape is inscribed in your subconscious forever, but you may not have noticed that the topology has changed over the last few years. Allow me to map out the new imperial realm.

Every one of us stands relative to two loci of power: patriarchy and imperialism. Imperialism wears the modernist mask of British colonialism or Japanese militarism and the post-modernist mask of Japanese and American economic colonialism, American militarism and cultural imperialism. An American expatriate, I read the Japanese and the British, and I am read by them. The three of us are read by you. And we read you reading us. We possess each other discursively.

Coincidentally, as a male, I cannot manifest femininity from the inside out. Our convergence is limited to my adoption of the ontology of the feminine and the discourses of feminism. As an educated western liberal, I partake of your body discursively.

The modernist discourses that produce and interpret history are phallic, imperialist and western. Of these textual devices the most powerful is the performance of nominal emission: that is, the imperial act of metaphorically possessing and fertilizing the subjugated world by defining and naming it, by distinguishing its inhabitants according to species, morphology, ethnicity, race, religion, stature, soma type, phrenology, market value or strategic value.

I am your Adam. I speak you. Your name is inscribed in my lexicon. I transform your ontology into my rhetoric. Our linguistic alliance extends the legitimacy of my power. A Trojan Horse, I have penetrated the city and exploit your desire for communication and recognition. Once again you find yourselves defined in my terms, with the very words you use to describe your culture to yourselves.

But the post-modernist colonial project has expanded beyond the modernist enterprise of subjugating, owning, ruling, establishing infrastructure, extracting resources, reproducing bureaucracy, instilling values and language, propagating and withdrawing. We are now perfecting the appropriation and interpretation of your knowledge; the control of communications and information and the construction of (dis)information.

First we appropriate your knowledge. Then we disembodify your culture, your labour and your being and store them as your 'virtual reality' in our database. Finally - and this is the most exquisite part - we substitute our database for yours. I describe you. I describe you to you. I describe you to you, until you describe you to you, in the terms I use to describe you to you.

If I express solidarity with your cultural aspirations, can my motivations be entirely egalitarian? Women of Malaysia, can you ignore that I, a white liberal male, by aligning myself with your struggle against patriarchy, thereby maintain another historical agenda, that of saving brown women from brown men?¹ Ostensibly abnegating my power over you, I inspire you to dismantle the structures of local male power, thereby perpetuating the root colonial economy of desire and power: use the women to control the men, control the men to use the women.

Preface

This paper and the preceding performance monologue, "Women of Malaysia...", are concerned with the performance of nominal emission, that is, with the imperialist act of naming and projecting a

representation upon the subjugated, a violent act of defining and staking territory. Specifically, I have focused on a particular epidemic of sexual privilege and domination, which I have termed "patriarchal heterosexualism". This paper assaults certain concepts held dear in Malaysia only coincidentally, but such an assault by a westerner falls into a long historical lineage of Orientalism and colonialist dynamics, and it cannot be taken as a neutral act. Yet to not attack the entrenchment of the discourses of patriarchy is also untenable in any sexual discourse that attempts to situate itself as praxis.

This paper focuses not on gender *per se* but on sexual identity and practice. It was written as an intervention with the purpose of critically expanding the critical purview of feminist discourse in one particular symposium to include subaltern sexual identities and practices. To speak of the discourses of feminism and not also refer to the body-particular and its various sexual expressions, particularly homosexuality, is to fight a surface skirmish, while leaving the underlying binary structures of patriarchy unquestioned and untouched.

In Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries, feminists, lesbians and male homosexuals are all associated in the minds of many people with creeping "western decadence".² Their deviance from traditional mores, places these social and sexual transgressors in a niche more "other" than the "other" to which all women have been traditionally consigned. I suggest here, that unless Malaysian feminist theory actively courts identification with these "sexual others", it is in danger of co-option into the epistemic domain of heterosexual patriarchy.

This paper will also consider another "particular" other within the body: a viral particle which doubles semiotically as a particle of information. The late art historian, Leo Bronstein, wrote history in the presence of a "Mysterious Companion," a constructed textual other consciousness. The "Mysterious Companion" of this paper is the virus that causes AIDS.

To speak of sexuality & the body and not also speak about AIDS would be, well, obscene. (Rich, 1987: 42)

The ideas concerning "heterosexualities" presented here are informed by my work as an artist and AIDS activist, particularly drawing on four years as a founding member, counselor and educator with the Community AIDS Service Penang, Malaysia, a grassroots non-government organization.

Finally, in the following pages, I am intervening in areas of social science in which I have no training or expertise. Indeed, I am looking between the lines of academic discourse, for lacunae in the field of signs.

Epidemos

"That's another thing we've learned from your Nation," said Mein Herr, "Map-making. But we've carried it much further than you. What do you consider the largest map that could be really be useful?"

"About six inches to the mile."

"Only six inches! exclaimed Mein Herr. We very soon got to six yards to the mile. Then we tried a hundred yards to the mile. And then came the grandest idea of all! We actually made a map of the country, on the scale of a mile to the mile!"

Have you used it much? I inquired?

From the point of view of death, disease has a mappable territory, a subterranean but secure place where its kinships, and its consequences are formed; local values define its forms. (Foucault, 1973: 149)

"It has never been spread out yet," said Mein Herr, "the farmers objected: they said it would cover the whole country and shut out the sunlight. We now use the country itself as its own map, and I assure you it does nearly as well". (Lewis Carroll, 1893).

I will begin at the site of the polemics surrounding AIDS, an intersection of sexual heterogeneity, contagion and death. It is a good place to begin, first, because language tends to thicken and lose its transparency there, in the attempt to contain the outbreak of entropy. And second, because sex, contagion and death have always lain like trolls in the swampy undergrowth of the male unconscious. Patriarchal discourse was constructed to bridge that swamp.

Sex and death are always liable to tear through the familiar fabric which clothes our naked experience. (Williamson, 1989: 70)

AIDS is a disease that has been surrounded by a polemic that defines sexual practice through discriminating condoned, legal sexual activities by authorized members, from those stigmatized as illicit, unauthorized, contagious. All of these practices - either authorized or unauthorized - involve the emission or transmission of bodily fluids, specifically blood, semen, vaginal fluid and breast milk. However, the term, 'emission' has broader implications, referring not only to bodily secretions during sex but also to the circulation of discourses surrounding sex.

The body and the mind are both defined by the nature of their emissions and fluid exchange. And it is to the monitoring, ordering and controlling of the commerce of these emissions and exchanges that the agencies of education, law, and government devote so much of their attention.

Mental and physical emissions represent the most profoundly destabilizing element in society and are the primary locus for the reiteration of norms and mores. Conversely, bodily issue is the primary site for the dramatization of society's construction of the "ab-normal", which by contrast serves to justify and fix the norm. During biological epidemics, the control of emissions and the suppression of "perverse" (abnormal) emitters often become related projects of the state. (Foucault, 1984: 273-289)

If the body confined and controlled has been the aim of the structures of power, it is in its "emissions" metaphorically that it exerts its most powerful subversive force. (Jean Fisher, 1990: 4)

Marc Guillaume, following on the heels of Michel Foucault, has grafted an image of the circulation of viruses in the fluids of the social body onto Foucault's descriptions of institutional circulation and the rites of medical normalization. He frames language itself as the contagious signifier circulating through the body politic.

Epidemos: upon the people (Greek). Something spreads itself across the population, something which under normal circumstances would be external to it: a foreign element, for example, or an unusual event.... In the public-health domain, those situations in which contagion is endogenous (circulated within the populace) as opposed to exogenous (coming from outside the population) lead to the terrifying and classic forms of epidemia. This is true of an infectious contact, of an endless and often concealed contamination (since healthy carriers themselves are potentially contagious), of the collapse of social bonds and moral rules and the fight against "contagious ills and evils." For when an epidemic incorporates itself into man, it is man himself whose practices, movements and relations must be controlled. Viruses...carry the absolute form of epidemia (namely the matrix of all possible epidemics), which is the loss of all immune defense systems (AIDS). (Guillaume, 1986: 59,66)

A parallel may be drawn between the discourses surrounding AIDS and the polemics of patriarchy. The obsession in the public mind with the epidemiology of a single meta-infection, to the exclusion of all other viral and bacterial infections in the body of the species, parallels the circulation of a monolithic sexual ideology through the languages of the species. To understand this parallel we must read the lacunae in the field of signs, between the lines of global AIDS statistics.

According to the World Health Organization, by mid-1993 there were over 14 million people infected with HIV-1 and HIV-2, the viruses that appear to cause AIDS. Of these, forty per cent were women and over one million were infants and children. (Action for AIDS & Langenbach, 1993: 2)

These statistics are daunting but they must be seen as part of a larger epidemiological picture. For example, over five million children alone die of acute diarrheal diseases such as cholera every year, another five

million die of respiratory infections such as pneumonia and tuberculosis. These types of infection are the leading cause of sickness in virtually all countries. An estimated 17.8 million people are infected with onchocerciasis (river blindness) causing 340,000 cases of total blindness and one million with significant loss of sight (Torrighiani and Parra, 1988: 3).

Between 200 million and 300 million people carry Hepatitis B virus chronically. Every year around 40 million people die from consequences of this chronic infection and six million develop related hepatocellular carcinoma, as a direct result of infection. (Jilg and Deinhardt, 1988:10).

About ten to twelve million people still suffer from leprosy, a disease which is held in check but is still endemic in 53 countries where 1.6 billion reside. Ten to twelve million people still suffer from this disease. (Maurice, 1988: 13)

In 1991, 270 million people contracted Malaria, of whom one to two million died, according to World Health Organization estimates (Forrester, 1992), not to mention millions of people still contracting yellow Fever, sleeping sickness, measles, and the millions who die annually of heart disease and various cancers and sexually transmitted diseases.

In light of the incidence of these other infectious diseases in the third world, AIDS does not appear on the surface to fulfill its five star billing. As a semiotic construction, AIDS has taken on a dominion of meaning far more extensive than its epidemiology would seemingly warrant. Both a viral epidemic and a profound disturbance in the field of signs, its mythic grandeur derives from a number of conditions, some endemic to the physical disease, some resulting from fear, and some strategically constructed to enhance geopolitical exploitation.³

Ideology

Because of its conflicted relationship with cultural constructions of sexuality and mores, the sign of AIDS is often exploited by those in power to sustain status quo structures of power relations and an ubiquitous ideology which describes sexuality as the binary relations between a subject (self) and an object (other).

Now in any society structured by an institutionalized imbalance of power relationships, an empowered "I" or "we" speaks to a disempowered "them". The narrating subject declaims from a position of cognitive privilege "...the existing order's uninterrupted discourse about itself, its laudatory monologue." (Debord, 1967: 25) In a society whose institutional structures are dominated by males, this "monologue" may be termed a "patriarchal discourse". Most societies in the world were patriarchal in this sense long before the advent of European colonialism during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Colonialism, however, imposed a specifically European form of institutionalization on already existent patriarchal traditions, inflating patriarchy into a universal meta-discursive "spectacle".

Much like Lewis Carroll's imagined map, patriarchy has become naturalized or essentialized (as if it were genetically or organically determined), and virtually indistinguishable from the landscape it pretends to perfectly resolve.

This essentialist core of western patriarchal discourse must be examined: particularly its *a priori* acceptance of the masculine/feminine biological duality as the only natural division of sexual identity. This "ethnocentric polarization of homosexual and heterosexual relations, that is such a marked feature of western culture" (Gay, 1986: 98) correspondingly legitimates the suppression of other culturally constructed sexualities as "abnormalities" or, "deviations". Out of a simple anatomical distinction of male from female, a monolithic ideology is drawn, reframing gender as a universal super-structure of polarized normative behaviour. This ideology we may term the discourse of Patriarchal Heterosexualism. A number of western feminists, have identified the exclusive

adherence to an essentialist heterosexual norm as patriarchy's fulcrum of oppression.

The Myth

Embedded in the ideology we find an essentialist mythology which defines the ideal sexual act as the authorized marriage of two genetically, culturally (and religiously) similar virgins, one male and the other female. When this "pure" couple finally conjoin, following an extended courtship, they do so for the first time and only with each other, one *tabula rasa* with another, their minds and bodies devoid of previous sexual inscriptions that would cause a rupture in the tissue of present time. It is an archetypal *mysterium coniunctionis*.

This narrative of sexuality as a closed dialectic (thesis + antithesis = synthesis/infant-the mythic patriarchal Hegelian chain of <i>ad infinitum</i> . Any desire outside this as subversive to it.	Down at viral scale, things look much simpler. For the virus there is and always has been only one human body with billions of orifices and openings. It is a deluged landscape -- a great reservoir of sperm, another of vaginal fluid, a third of milk, all flowing into a cosmic ocean of blood.	thesis) represents inscription of discourse in a approved couplings multiplicity of idealization is seen
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But, the narrative is problematic at its very conception in that its idealization of a state of bodily "purity" is itself a nostalgic reconstruction, following the loss of innocence. Such a narrative is not naive and could issue only from a state of sexual knowledge.

The situation is further complicated by our study of the epidemiology of our Mysterious Companion, HIV. Epidemiologically, sexuality is not just between, but through the persons present at the act. Every individual body is an opening into a stream of sexual history and a chain of genetic material. When we conjoin with one person, we conjoin with every person with whom they, in turn, previously conjoined with, etc., back through time and across the expanse of continents.

So, back in our narrative of the wedding night, the bride is presumed to arrive at the conjugal bed a virgin, as dictated by patriarchal desire and law. The male, however, is exempted from the protective voyeurism of the Father, by virtue of his symbolic alignment with the trajectory of phallic desire. Most likely, he arrives at the conjugal bed with an already elaborately embroidered sexual history. The wedding night, then, could link her present-time with the histories of possibly tens or even hundreds of people, both male and female, through her not-so-pure groom. What then is the value or meaning of her "virginity," their "heterosexuality," or their vaunted sexual "normality" at that moment?

Any elucidation of a meaningful, culturally specific ideology of sexuality must take this extra-cultural epidemiological economy into account. Far from being "natural", the closed patriarchal dialectics justifying and perpetuating this not-uncommon situation is actually a prophylactic construction, protecting the privilege of one sex to unilaterally enjoy (and infect) the body of the other.

Lynne Segal (1989: 134-35) points out that heterosexual intercourse has always been more dangerous for women than for men, first, because the primary trajectory of fluid emission is toward the female, possibly resulting in the complications of infections or gestations. Secondly, as a direct result of this anatomical fact, women's bodies have long been the site of social battles over reproduction rights: the rights of the women against the laws of the State, against the rights of the foetus, and against the interests of physically stronger males. A state of danger exists across the spectrum of sexual "tags": sex as unauthorized reproduction, sex as relationship, sex as love, bondage, cultural appropriation or economic exploitation. In all of these the fundamental, unequivocal relationship of human coupling to viral replication remains unchanged.

Desire in the Text

Language is the armory of the human mind; and at once contains the trophies of the past and the weapons of its future conquests. (Coleridge, 1951: 136)

A close look at the language utilized to support the dialectics of patriarchy reveals a text in crisis. Is the prefix, "hetero" of "heterosexual" the same "hetero" as in "heterogeneous"? And, is the "homo" of "homosexual" the same "homo" as in "homogeneous"? Couldn't heterosexuality be classified as a homo-sexual orthodoxy since it suppresses surrounding hetero-sexualities, one of which is homosexuality? So, then, why not classify the practice of heterosexuality under the category, "homo-sexuality" while homosexuality can fall under "hetero-sexualities"? One of the dangers of theoretical discourse concerning gender is that we tend to discuss sexuality as we would describe an object; as if we view ourselves as emitters but not transmitters - putting out but not circulating information, not engaging in intercourse with other bodies. We become disembodied, as it were, by the demands of the discourse itself, or by the academic context within which we often must work. We discuss the sociological and political ramifications of sexuality from the position of a disinterested, anonymous author without history, positionality or identity.

Angela McRobbie addresses this issue:

One of the central tenets of the women's movement has been that the personal is political. Similarly, feminists recognize the close links between personal experience and the areas we choose for study - our autobiographies invade and inform what we write....Although few radical (male) sociologists would deny the importance of the personal in precipitating social and political awareness, to admit how their own experience has influenced their choice of subject-matter (the politics

Ironically I have found my praxis in the margins of your hetero-sexual discourse, at the site traditionally held by you, the 'invisible woman'. As a white man, I am all too visible to your gaze; as a homo-sexual I am not..

matter (the politics of selection) seems more or less taboo....This absence of self and the invalidating of personal experience in the name of the more objective

social sciences goes hand in hand with the silencing of other areas....(McRobbie, 1980: 113)

By camouflaging our emissions - our "coming" - we deny our agency. This loss of nerve is certainly not limited to the practice of sociology. (In fact, due to the interactive nature of their work, sociologists tend to be more reflexive and aware of their own foibles than most other academics.) It appears throughout academic and cultural commerce, particularly in the arena of sexual and cultural politics. The absence of proclaimed bias and the voyeuristic presumption of "objectivity" masks the author's sexual predisposition. The elision of a specific voice leads us to presume the speaker's identity as male and heterosexual. When the audience is left unspecified, they too are presumed to be heterosexual and male.

This issue may be raised in Malaysian ethnography. In "With moyang melur in Carey Island," Wazir Jahan Karim carefully wove into "academic" ethnography her personal responses as a young Malay anthropologist some years ago, living with and studying a group of Ma' Betise'. Sensitive to racial dynamics (her cultural "centrality" versus their "periphery") and her emotional conditioning, she struggled with their foreign categories of behaviour, sexual expectations and social prohibitions. Her budding relationship with a Ma' Betise' hunter ramified into "a complexity (she) could not fathom...."

...by bonding myself to them through family and kinship, I should have married one of them but I could not fulfill their expectations of me. By choosing to remain unmarried, I drew attention to my own gender and sexuality. If I had married I would have been regarded casually like any other young man or woman, left alone to get on with my daily life. Furthermore, I participated in an interpersonal relationship which would have caused problems all around and subsequently withdrew in a way which drew attention to my 'weaker' female character. (Karim, 1993: 86)

This alienation of the outsider experience by Karim, her decision to remain unmarried and her sense of astonishment at the "complexity" of her relationships in the village are all experiences shared by those on the sexual periphery within their own social matrices. When reading Karim's narrative, I was struck by the predisposition of her speech. The text was directed to an audience who would understand what she meant by "like any other young man or woman", because they too partake of the central master narrative of heterosexual discourse.

I find myself trying to imagine a lesbian ethnographer working in Karim's stead among the Ma' Betise', attempting to negotiate the kinds of social pressures which Karim described. She would not only face the community's problematization of her role as an unattached female, but, I imagine, also the utter invisibility/ unmentionability (and perhaps professional denial) of her attraction toward one or more Ma' Betise' women. Would a lesbian be able to "out" herself in the field, or would she have to maintain a charade to continue her fieldwork? What would be the consequences of revealing her sexual identity in a traditional society such as the Ma' Betise'? So many questions arise here that may never be answered.

Karim is by no means alone in ignoring sexual perspectives other than her own. Pat Caplan framed the problem in her introduction to the volume, *Gendered Fields*, in which Karim's paper appears:

Several authors discuss the question of sexuality in the field more openly, although it is striking that, while all three men consider this topic...only one of the women (Karim) is courageous enough to discuss it at any length and no woman acknowledges a sexual experience in the field. This perhaps indicates that for women sexual activity or, even more so, 'confessing' it, still has very different consequences than for men. Furthermore, none of the ethnographers in this collection makes any mention of homosexual attraction or relations in the field, and indeed, the silence in the literature with respect to this topic is even more

deafening than that concerning heterosexual relationships. (Caplan, 1993: 23)⁴

McRobbie's call for personal reflexivity - admirably taken up by Karim and other Malaysian feminist writers- begs a further question: whether it is enough to apply the reflexive lens only to one's own order of experience (usually that of the global heterosexual majority) when writing ethnographic or social theory. If we accept even an equivocal notion of "constructed sexualities", then limiting the responsibility of the writer to a reflection on only her or his own sexual construction, narrows the profound range of responsibility available to the researcher when s/he walks into the field. The limitations and consequences to the fieldwork of the researcher's cross-gender attractions that is, her libinal 'centrality' must be reflexively critiqued in the same manner as her sex, race, culture, education, language, class, cultural conditioning, etc.

Economies of Desire

Few ethnographers would argue with Ross and Rapp's assertions that physical differences and relationships become codified as social action and speech:

Sexuality's biological base is always experienced culturally, through a translation. the bare biological facts of sexuality do not speak for themselves; they must be expressed socially. Sex feels individual, or atleast private, but those feelings always incorporate the roles, definitions, symbols and meanings of the worlds in which they are constructed. (Ross and Rapp, 1981: 51)

Ethnography is no less speech and social action than other daily life behaviours; it too is a "translation" framing desire in language and sexuality in the text. All objective or privileged stances toward sexuality must be deconstructed in order to see that every body stands in a predisposed position within the economies of desire.

Economies are profoundly complex synergistic systems, characterized by the exchange of liquid assets. "Economies of desire", then, involve far more than just two conventional signs of sexual identity: masculine and feminine. In any sexual economy we would have to presume the existence of a spectrum of desire. For example, we might expect to include those whose sexual desire is directed toward like sexual attributes (homosexuality); those whose desire is directed across gender demarcations (heterosexuality); those who desire both male and female sexual attributes (bisexuality); those who engage in sexual exchange outside of certified couplings (promiscuity, incest, adultery, bestiality); those who, out of desire or economic need, bring sexual exchange into the market place (prostitution); those who alter the chemistry of their body and brain (drug use);⁵ those who structurally alter their anatomy (transsexualism), or alter their dress conform to that of the opposite gender (transvestitism), in accordance with their self-image, as markers of their desire, or, as in the case of a shaman, to fulfill a particular social role .

Subaltern sexual agency is often perceived by patriarchal institutions as perpetrating an 'unnatural' assault on the 'natural' phallic order, subversive to the transcendent master texts upon which that order is based: folk wisdom, morality, religion and science. However, it is dangerous to over-simplify this situation, as there are many cultures where this characterization of relations between patriarchal order and the subaltern cannot easily be applied. These would include the Hijra of India (Nanda, 1986: 35-54), or the Sou Hei women of the "marriage resistance movement" in Kwantung, China (Shankar, 1986: 69-81), among many others.

There are also cultures in which the very notion of a subaltern sexuality or sexual identity simply has no credence within the society, although the whole ritual format of sexuality in the society itself may be seen as an exotic deviation from the perspective of modernist master texts. This set of categories would include locally differentiated constructions of sexuality and social power relations including initiation and circumcision rites, menstrual and marriage rites, for example, nose bleeding and flute sucking in Papua New Guinea (Herdt, 1986: 101-198), "mummy-baby" games (papali) in Lesotho,

Africa (Gay, 1986: 99-107), Macumba bicha activities in Brazil (Fry, 1986: 141-152), et al.

There are also variations on these socially matrixed practices of desire and power that are so individual, personal and subtle (possibly short-term phenomena that exist for one life-time only) as to remain unvoiced and unidentified.

All of the above sexualities have been constructed as signs, identities, lifestyles, and sub-cultures, antithetical to a universalized homogeneous ideology of normalized sexual practice.

The Body Colonized

The imposition of a definition by a State or culture upon another state or culture, justifying the annexation, or appropriation of the subjugated culture and its products (emission) - this annexation being the direct consequence of the agent State's naturalized reading of its own "manifest destiny" - characterized the European and American orientalist & colonialist enterprises of the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries.

Similarly, when a male dominated State defines the roles, behaviour, or nature of women (or theorizes "what women want"), it thereby justifies the annexation of their bodies and their emissions. And, correspondingly, when the institutionalized ideology of male dominion, divested of its essentialism, is imposed on sexual minorities, this too is a colonization.

If we change a few of the terms in Edward Said's discussion of Orientalism, it can be applied quite fluidly to the dynamics of patriarchy:

Orientalism (Patriarchal heterosexualism) is...a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts; it is an elaboration not only of a

basic geopolitical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident (Homosexuals and Heterosexuals)) but also of a whole series of "interests" which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it is rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative or novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences); power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what "we" do and what "they" cannot do or understand as "we" do). Indeed my real argument is that Orientalism (Patriarchal Heterosexualism) is - and does not simply represent - a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient (the Sexual Other) than it does with "our" world. (Said, 1978: 12)

Lewis Carroll's perfectly resolved (1:1) map symbolizes the ideal of the orientalist cartographer: the landscape perfectly resolved through its subjugation. Correspondingly, the body and its desires -- mysterious, ephemeral, de-stabilizing, uncontrollable -- is normalized and controlled through the physics of patriarchy. The struggle for its liberation from this hegemonic physics is intimately related to all other de-colonizations.⁶

....one of the primary tasks of both feminism and gay liberation has been the decolonisation of our bodies; a reclamation of the right to define our identities, our sexualities, for and by ourselves. Discussion of the body in relation to gender, sexuality and representation have been important in challenging dominant ideologies of sexual identity as natural and fixed, anatomically determined, biologically given. Anatomy both is and isn't always destiny. (McGrath, 1988: 57)

Central to this struggle is the deconstruction of the monumental dualism at the heart of patriarchal physics. Once again, Said's interrogation of orientalist structures of knowledge may be applied here as well:

For that is the main intellectual issue raised by Orientalism. Can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality seems to be genuinely divided, into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the consequences humanly? ...I mean to ask whether there is any way of avoiding the hostility expressed by the division, say, of men into "us" (Westerners) and "they" (sic) (Orientals). (Said, 1978: 45)

Can we avoid "the hostility expressed by the division" of men and women into "us" (heterosexuals) and "them" (non-heterosexuals)?

Said's statement points us to a root question of sexual politics: can we afford to reiterate and uphold a simplistic binary representation of sexual desire when the survival of whole cultures depends upon our willingness to reclaim and negotiate from our heterogeneous sexualities? Reclamation requires an interested and committed discourse which proclaims positionality and agency and the possibility of meeting on even ground: identifying ourselves as embodied beings, "coming" from specific constructions of desire, tradition and habit, and capable of fluidly accepting the heterogeneous representations of those whose sexual desires do not converge with our own.

Epilogue

Women of Malaysia, can you ignore that I, a white gay male, by aligning myself with your struggle against patriarchy, thereby maintain another historical agenda, that of saving brown men from brown women? Ostensibly abnegating my power over you, I inspire you to dismantle the structures of local female power, thereby perpetrating the root colonial economy of desire and power; use the men to control the women, control the women to use them.

Notes

- ¹ cf. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty (1988: 92).
- ² "Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third world woman' caught between tradition and modernization. These considerations would revise every detail of judgments that seem valid for a history of sexuality in the West ..." (Spivak, 1988: 102)

Spivak (1988: 91) points out that methodologically, the post-colonial intellectual "In seeking to learn to speak to (rather than listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject of the subaltern women ... systematically 'unlearns' female privilege". This unlearning requires a critique of postcolonial discourse using its own tools against it.

Feminist analysis and interventions into traditional patriarchal power structures in the Third World may inadvertently perpetuate colonialist disruption. By unraveling the structures of traditional male power that opposed (and still oppose) external imperialism, activists run the risk of subverting the only functional protectors against rampant westernization and external expropriation.

AIDS discourse, most of which has been formulated in First World societies, runs a similar risk when applied to Third World contexts. Control and intervention in any epidemic leads to extra-cultural information, and beliefs intruding on traditional mores and behavior patterns. These intrusions and disruptions have been particularly prevalent in the AIDS pandemic (the first pandemic of the post-modern age).

Western medicine was the first to identify the virus and western drug companies, hoping to make a killing, mounted the first pitiful medical defense against HIV. Meanwhile, the western gay community, under early devastating viral assault and ignored by homophobic government agencies, developed the first support networks and education programmes. Subsequently, western AIDS medicine and education have been disseminated to other cultures, largely via the western media, western universities and the international relief establishment, again based in the West. It is conceivable that during this pandemic we will see medicine, sexual education and sexual beliefs globally normalized and aligned with a those of western cultures. The orientalist project continues.

³ Endemic:

- * HIV Disease became a pandemic (i.e., present on all continents) as early as the late 1970s (Mann, 1987: 49), before its existence was even known to the medical community, and a full decade before its viral cause was identified, and because the disease remains asymptomatic but infectious for around 10 years, the extent of the pandemic has been chronically underestimated. This has caused profound insecurity in the world's medical establishments, at both local and global levels.
- * HIV Disease combines synergistically with numerous bacteria, fungi and viruses, producing "reservoirs" of infectious disease such as Tuberculosis, which previously had been under control in most countries.

- * AIDS affects people in their most productive ages, 15-40. As such, it poses a medical and economic risk to Third World countries without parallel. In some African cities between 30 and 50% of the population is now infected. In India and Thailand millions are already infected. In Malaysia, WHO estimates an infected population of between 50,000 and 500,000 people, over 95% of whom are heterosexual.

Fear:

A "third epidemic" of fear, stigmatization, discrimination, and persecution has accompanied the 'first epidemic' of HIV infection and the 'second epidemic' of AIDS manifestation. This third epidemic is also a pandemic, affecting societies with widely divergent governmental and economic systems. AIDS has focused public attention on prejudices and mythologies concerning sexuality and difference which in most traditional societies have remained largely unspoken and unexamined for hundreds and even thousands of years.

Exploitation:

The spectacle of AIDS was created very early by the western media, exercising its homophobia and expressing its concern for the well-being of only First World societies. The epidemic has seen, for example, cases of economic exploitation of infected Third World populations by drug companies intent on testing products affordable only to the people of the First World.

- 4 Certain basic assumptions have coloured the brief discussion of homosexuality in the anthropological literature ... Most anthropologists based their evaluation of homosexual practices in other cultures on the (western) deviance model of psychology and sociology, assuming that heterosexuality represented the norm for sexual behaviour, and, therefore, homosexuality was abnormal or deviant behaviour. Such evaluations were often in direct contrast to the meaning or value attached to homosexual behaviour in the culture studies, since many groups accepted homosexual practices

within their social system. For example, male homosexual practices of Australian aborigines has been labelled as "sexual abnormalities" and "perversions". Other anthropologists, however, have shown that the aboriginal practices were acceptable and institutionalized in the form of 'brother-in-law' exchange among aborigines. (Blackwood, 1986: 3)

- ⁵ Included here because of the symbolic equivalency of various illicit penetrations in the eyes of the surveilling state (Goldstein, 1989: 89-92).
- ⁶ Contemporary inter-cultural forms of sexual exploitation, such as sex tourism, prostitution, including child prostitution, the international trafficking of prostitutes and maids, etc. have expanded tremendously with the development of leisure economies, the advent of air transportation, affordable Third World tours for the industrial world's middle-classes, and a widening gap between rich and poor cultures. Unilateral 'sexploitation' reveals profound economic and ethnic alienation between the people of developed and developing economies and those of the third world.

Whether practised by first world heterosexuals or homosexuals, western artists on Bali, occupying Japanese soldiers, or Malaysian businessmen in Thailand, these practices represent yet another manifestation of the patriarchal tradition of the sexual exploitation of the objectified passive sex-recipient by a richer, dominant subject. Homosexuals are certainly as prone to this type of exploitive objectification of the 'other' as heterosexuals, as the ubiquitous sex tours to Thailand, Philippines, and Sri Lanka underscore. Cf. the relationship of this tradition to expatriate sexuality in Bali [Vickers, 1989: 119-120, 122, 1226].

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Kajian M

LIST

Syed
Lectu
Singa

Micha
Docto
Nethe

Otom
Assoc
Scien

Ray I
Lectu
Singa

Mazr
Assoc
Unive

Must
Lectu
Mala

Cecil
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Unive
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Roha
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