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#29

genderstudies



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"Queer Lovers and Hateful Others: Regenerating Violent Times and Places"

Jin Haritaworn

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I Sebastian Funke*

In "Queer Lovers and Hateful Others: Regenerating Violent Times and Places", Jin Haritaworn takes the reader on a manifold journey through the Berlin inner-city districts of Kreuzberg and Neukölln, tracing the "drama of queer lovers and hateful Others". This drama takes place in an environment in which queers of colour strive to oppose racism and gentrification in order to sustain themselves and to build a community that is not predicated on social death. Queerness appears to be more visible today than it has been in the past and queer subjects have become "a lovely sight". However, processes of "queer regeneration" were not without costs. Haritaworn outlines that same-sex intimacies have become well-established images in so-called Western societies, and further argues that politicians and the media have misused this acceptance in order to promote their islamophobic agendas, constructing "the homophobic migrant" as the "new folk devil", who is rendered as "hateful, homophobic and disposable".

In the first chapter ("Setting The Scene"), Haritaworn treats queers of colour as "geographic subjects" in order to outline and discuss historical processes of gentrification in Kreuzberg and Neukölln and the "gaybourhoud" of Berlin-Schöneberg. While these quarters have become vibrant places of queer regeneration, the arrival of people with class and race privileges, freshly decriminalised and depathologised, leads to a displacement of those who have been there for longer, mainly people of colour from low-income backgrounds.

The second chapter ("Love") explores the changing public visual field of Berlin's inner-city districts, where positive images of queer intimacies – formerly hidden, criminalised and pathologised – are growing. These images teach "the migrants" that "love deserves respect" and accompany a media discourse of a study that "scientifically proves that youth of Turkish origin hold the most homophobic attitudes". Furthermore, Haritaworn argues that these intimacies are homonormative as they reinscribe the values of a heteronormative neoliberal consumer culture.

Chapter three ("Hate") examines what Haritaworn calls "the hate/crime paradigm", a process of sticking criminality and pathology on bodies and populations that are already perceived as hateful. In the German

context of war on terror and crime, discourses on "Hasskriminalität" (hate crime), "Hassgewalt" (hate violence) and the "Intensivtäter" (intensive offender) have been closely linked to Muslims, marking them as violent, irrational, criminal, patriarchal and homophobic. Moreover, Haritaworn argues towards an abolitionist imagination of "a world without prisons", challenging punitive institutions, like prisons, psychiatric hospitals and other biomedical institutions.

The fourth chapter ("Queer Nostalgia") discusses the Memorial to the Homosexuals Persecuted under National Socialism, which was inaugurated in the Tiergarten park in Berlin Mitte in 2008. It highlights the temporal dimension of the narrative of "Queer Lovers and Hateful Others". Haritaworn argues that the "Homo Memorial" is not merely a remembrance of grief or a traumatic past, but a contemporary politicising of the murderous past, as people of colour become guilty because they are unable to exhibit inherited guilt: "If you have not overcome the racial past you cannot be part of the modern post-racist discourse".

"Queer Lovers and Hateful Others" is a challenging book. Its analytical depth and complexity requires the reader's patience and previous knowledge of the works of Sara Ahmed, Judith Butler, Michel Foucault or Edward Said, to name but a few. At the same time, its ethnographic writing style makes it a thrilling read as Haritaworn draws on work based on over ten years of research, including interviews and kitchen table conversations with queer people of colour, as well as a rich archive of activism, arts, media, policy and more. While Jin Haritaworn takes us through the jungle of Berlin at an accelerated tempo, we meet queer lovers, drag kings, criminalised youth and other 'Others'. As they pass by, significant questions remain: How do we think about identity? How should we participate in political processes? And what would it mean to truly decolonise gender and sexuality?

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