

Title of the Essay:

Seeking and Sorting Refuge Queerly:

Disrupting my *Zombie* Breeding Grounds on the Stolen Land, aka Canada

Abstract:

Using critical autoethnography as the research method, this paper revisits the writer's past experiences of homophobia and racism in academia and in spaces of advocacy. It considers the positionalities of being a mental health survivor, to becoming a LGBTQ+ refugee resettlement support worker, to then a life-long student. It disrupts Canada's claim to be a safe haven for LGBTQ+ refugees while colonial violence against Indigenous peoples continues unabated. It emphasises that settler colonialism propelled by capitalism absorbs and *zombifies* Black and racialized queer refugee bodies into maximizing profit and legitimizing the dispossession of Indigenous peoples. Drawing upon Marxist, feminist and Indigenous theoretical frameworks, the writer argues that on stolen land, justice initiatives must centre Indigenous resurgence. It suggests prefigurative politics for grassroots organizing and transformative justice in order to dismantle white supremacy, cis-heteropatriarchy and capitalism.

This paper captures some of my experiences of homophobia and racism in academia and spaces of advocacy, and the positionalities of being a mental health survivor, to service provider, to becoming a life-long student. The experience of homophobia happened in a university space a decade ago. Experiences of racism cited here are perpetrated by some unknown and known white people, and a white queer woman in a space of queer advocacy in Toronto. These are not uncommon experiences of many Black and racialized queer refugees that I have worked with. I contextualize them in order to a) understand and theorize the operatives of systems and their interconnectedness, b) explore how I am implicated in the violence that I try to eradicate through my work, c) situate my multiple selves, as a *system*, on a land where the genocide of First Peoples has been going on for centuries, and d) envision transformative justice.

Critical autoethnography (CA) draws upon the multiple layers of consciousness and identities within the self and transforms personal experiences into universal human experiences through self-reflexivity. It helps us scrutinize our bodies as lived, while critiquing and undoing the contexts that ties us ((Mendez, 2013; Jones, 2016; Boylorn & Orbe, 2021). Thus, I use CA to look at how I am absorbed into the systems that I also resist, in regulating queer refugee bodies for the capitalist market. It is this dialectic – the glorious paradox of contemporary life that I try to unpack. This engagement will also help with my research focus on LGBTQ+ resettlement on the stolen land of Indigenous Peoples, aka Canada. I begin by outlining the background to my landing in Canada.

The Run... Towards the Glowing Mirage

Canada. I envisioned this revered ‘safe haven’ while I was studying for a Master’s degree in Hong Kong, my interim landing place and from where I had applied for immigration to Canada. I was running away from persecution as a gay Sri Lankan. A friend had urged me, “go to Canada, don’t think twice”. Returning to Sri Lanka and while waiting for my immigrant visa, I continued to face violence. A couple of thugs broke my ribs at a cruisy park. Having surrounded me at a beach in

Colombo, a gang of policemen threatened to expose me for my ‘shameful behaviour’. I was a university teacher. Even more than my life, I feared being humiliated in public.

I landed in Canada in 2005, rebooting my life as a PhD student. I felt ‘free’. I came out to everyone. Settling in, I enjoyed this honeymoon phase. It did not last long.

“Sensitive”. “Controversial”. “Inappropriate”. “Immoral”. These four words by the director of the now re-hashed Centre for Support of Teaching (CST) at the university where I was a PhD student and a Teaching Assistant (TA) sounded the death knell of my life. She was responding to my presentation, ‘Sexuality and Inclusivity - My Story’, that used storytelling as a pedagogical tool. Her maiming me sealed off my euphoria in the pink-washed fantasy land, and my progress as doctoral student and award-winning teacher. She argued that the CST’s mandate was to “ensure a safe and respectful environment for the students”. Thus I, as a (racialized) TA, should not have presented matters from my personal life in the classroom. They then added a new clause to their website, prescribing that prior must be approval obtained when presenting matters of a “sensitive” nature. Mesmerized by the glory of this ‘safe haven’ I had been lured into, I succumbed to depression, hopes shattered. After a couple of years of futilely seeking help from the cis-heteronormative mental healthcare industry, I reinvented myself as a LGBTQ+ refugee resettlement support worker, and recently as a student in social work.

Pride, Freedom, and the ‘Glorious’ Canada Day

Recently, a former client proudly informed me that he was interviewed by CTV News on his first Pride celebrations in Toronto in June 2022 (Ghobrial & Consky, 2022). Soon after, Prime Minister Trudeau in his Canada Day speech on July 1, 2022 quoted him:

“And let’s remember, the thousands upon thousands of stories like Ali’s, a refugee from Uganda who has just arrived in Canada. In June, in Toronto, Ali put on a rainbow shirt and celebrated Pride openly for the first time in his life. Being able to be who you are, to love

whom you love, to chase your dreams, to live without fear – this is the freedom the Maple Leaf represents. To Ali, and those who arrived here last week, or last month, or last year, to the people whose ancestors arrived here a few centuries ago, or thousands of years ago, to all people in Canada: this is your home” (Trudeau, 2022, 7:02).

First and foremost, it is important to recognize the right to life for Ali and thousands of LGBTQ+ refugees whose displacements have colonial and neocolonial subtexts. It is here that the mismatch should be exposed between Trudeau’s cheers and the ever-diminishing funding for LGBTQ+ refugee resettlement, from housing to healthcare, as Mulé and Gamble (2018) outlined. How can I understand the ways in which the little joys of the marginalized are reused for Canadian nationalist expansion, and masking violence against Indigenous Peoples, as in Trudeau’s lavish speech? How has the struggle for queer rights become homonationalism? How does capitalism turn both Ali and me into victims and accomplices of violence, both in relation to our racialized and sexualized existence, and as being essential to driving capital? How do we fight back?

Formative Years: Sexualization as Cisheteropatriarchalization

Chapman and Withers (2019) coined the term cisheteropatriarchalization to explain and dismantle the normative understandings of the violent history and presence of social work. Such violence is exerted through moral denigrations, and material displacements of peoples globally. Also shattered are their infinitely varied ways of living in relation to love, family, sexes and genders when forming social relationships, imposing white Christian norms. These included the nuclear family, gender binary, monogamy, heteronormativity, racist, classist, and disablist differentiations of gender, sex, morality, and danger, and specific structures of men’s authority over women and adults’ authority over children. Accordingly, British colonialism criminalized homosexuality. Thus, LGBTQ+ refugee producing geographies have a direct relationship to colonialism and its later neocolonial forces fuelled by Christian evangelism (Murray, 2016) and all other religious ideologies

including Buddhism, as in Sri Lanka. I reminisce with this powerful song by the Sri Lankan singer, Nanda Malini:

Pahan kanda mula andurui (It is dark under the lighthouse)

Obata gayana mage hada andurui (I sing for you with a heart full of sorrow)

Mage pela andurui (Darkness dwells in my humble abode)

Canada represents this lighthouse. Its lustre hides the darkness beneath. After running away, facing homophobia in this ‘safe haven’, getting lost, reclaiming a life, providing resettlement support for predominantly Black and racialized LGBTQ+ refugees and returning to academia, I have not seen settler spaces that centre Indigenous justice. Grappling with such dilemmas of settler-centred justice, adjusting to individualistic Canadian ways felt like jumping back into the frying pan from the fire. The frying pan that ‘saved’ me from the fire, actually deployed me with other motives. How have I ended up putting my queerness up for sale in a Nation State that has legalized homosexuality? How is ‘freedom’ implicated in masking the violence against Indigenous Peoples?

Re-queering the Already Queer

As a newcomer, I had to adjust to a second-rate life whose spectacular whiteness was its unattainable centre, and to being conscious of being racialized and sexualized. My gayness, just like Ali’s, became a hot sell in the ‘equity, diversity and inclusion’ market. My new demi-self then found a radical voice – in the marches for justice for Black and Indigenous Peoples, in the corporatized Pride parades and in making LGBTQ+ refugees more visible. Reinventing myself as a frontline worker became my process of re-queering. This involved positioning myself in the North American queer culture and history, and carving out an identity as an out gay man. Through my work with LGBTQ+ refugees, I have in fact mastered the process of re-queering of the already queer refugees, playing by the State’s codes of assimilation. I am back in academia as a doctoral student in social work. Revisiting some moments of my journey – bloodied by intersections of

homophobia and racism, and how I have ended up endorsing the ‘safe haven’ rhetoric – is vital when theorizing sexual citizenship and cisheteropatriarchalization.

I begin by reclaiming my body and my memory (Ahmed, 2017), in disrupting my existence as an *agent* of re-queering the already queer and racialized LGBTQ+ refugee bodies through the mechanisms of resettlement. From the processes of integration to the citizenship procedures that perpetuate settler-colonial glory, queer refugees are groomed to become obedient homonationalists of a state that negotiates their exploitable labour in favour of the market. My quest for liberation has led to propagating relations of dominance, exclusion and violence. In this volatile interstice I revisit my positionalities as a key marker of my Other and as my salvation.

Reformatting – The Dangerous and Exoticized Object

Ahmed (2017) reminded me of my body as memory with different entangled sites of violence: things that happen because of how we are seen and not seen. From Toronto’s Gay Village to University, my sexuality and race interlocked. Unfriendly stares and blunt questioning of my presence ended my exciting rides to Gay Bars. A white gay friend renamed me ‘Randy’. My name was too difficult. “Besides, Randy suits you well”, he laughed. Only later I found its meaning! Unknown volunteers corrected my English accent. I received gleeful remarks, “wow, you are smart”, “Canada needs people like you.” A white man who appeared to be tipsy, chased me at a subway station: “you dirty Paki; f**king Jane and Finch guy”, while onlookers were loudly silent. A dreadful racist attack happened at a queer activist space by a white woman who had championed transgender rights. She started ridiculing my ‘unpronounceable’ name when I disagreed with her condemnation of Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA). When a white ally questioned her action, her anger intensified towards me. I was the only racialized and queer newcomer there. Shockingly, most remained silent. For a few years I avoided the Gay Village, fearing violence. I

developed a form of ‘double consciousness’, which Du Bois (1903/2007) theorized referring to the racial oppression Black people face and the devaluation of their humanity in a white society.

How is acceptance glued to rejection so firmly in the land that I fled to? How does the white gaze both terrorize and consume my brown queer body in its loud white supremacist devouring? Exploring race relations and the construction of race, Giwa and Greensmith (2012) highlighted that systemic racism infiltrated the LGBTQ+ community in Toronto, rendering the lived experiences of many queer people of colour. Logie and Rwigema (2014), referring to LGBTQ+ women of colour, argued that white privilege embeds whiteness as central to LGBTQ+ identities, and is reproduced through social norms, media and everyday interactions. Challenging the censure of QuAIA activism, the substance of my view was dismissed; instead, the subtext was “who are *you* to challenge us?” For the white woman and the onlookers, my disagreement was unexpected. My body became dangerous. My (racialized) queerness and the desire to connect with kindred spirits did not matter. White supremacy masked their own marginalized identities even in pursuing justice.

The question of who constantly gets centred, recognized, and celebrated while others such as myself are not just left out but also *denigrated* is integral to white supremacy. Chapman and Withers (2019) explained that oppressive legacies inform contemporary social orders, social relations and their violence. As a legacy of colonialism, they cited white supremacy as “normative and even liberal discourses, practices, and structures that give disproportionate value to white bodies, minds, institutions, countries, values, and mores” (p. 5). Hence, a racialized gay immigrant like myself should not challenge white settler views, however oppressive they sound. In their social world, I am allowed to partake only as long as I accept being a subservient outsider follower.

Dua et al. (2005) shed further light on racist violence, such as I have faced. Extending Foucault’s concepts of power, identity, and discourse, they explained how locations of race and racism in culture, modernity and whiteness concealed kinship of race and racism with capitalism.

For Said (1993), both imperialism and colonialism are driven by ideological formations, that certain geographies and their people “*require* and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination” (p. 9). In subordinating, othering, re-labelling and violating me so authoritatively and publicly, the perpetrators reiterated the supremacy of their white race. At the subway station, I chose to flee and save my ‘dirty Paki-ed’ and ghettoized, ‘Jane and Finch’ body from a public shaming. In succumbing to inferiority, numbness and subordination, I did not or *could not* think, even in my most daring dreams, of yelling back at the Master, “you dirty white”. In the queer activist space, I first froze and then melted down. Fanon (1963/2004) aptly reminded me that “confronted with the world configured by the colonizer, the colonized subject is always presumed guilty” (p.16). My flights from violence revealed the impacts of double-consciousness. Surveilled racial apartheid from Jane and Finch, to Indigenous reserves, to Indian residential torture chambers are essential denominators of accumulation by dispossession, as Harvey (2003), a Marxist geographer explained. Material, ideological, social, spatial and spiritual dispossessions are integral to the game of subordination, draped in such pseudo-inclusionary traits.

Those racist screams denote the hegemonic power of whiteness, which at the same time becomes invisible or unmarked through the workings of the system. I became dirty and a ‘Paki’. In their belittling of myself and bodies like mine, the really dirty white folks cleansed themselves and their kind. The dirty whiteness became the invisible, yet ubiquitous yardstick that ensured its gaze was always on the ‘other’. The volunteers who corrected my accent and the friend who named me Randy remind me that I am an oversexed, and exotic outcast in their colonial space, thus their urgency to assimilate and *consume* me. Those who praised me for being smart were saying that I am not only an exception among the ‘stupid’ people of my kind, but also on the ‘right path’ to be sucked into this moralized economy, which Chapman and Withers (2019) quoted Sunera Thobani (2007) to explain the hierarchized, exalted, and denigrated nature of human worth. “Moral

economies always operate in two directions at once... they devalue Indigenous and racialized folks while simultaneously exalting or valorizing white citizens” (p. 9). Once many other interlocking determinants such as being new (Yan & Anucha, 2017), trans and queer, being poor, using English as a second language, and having names that do not sound anglicized, they become subhuman. Thus, disposability can happen just by four words, as at the corporatized University.

Understanding Maiming – My ‘Death-by-Four-Words’

With Foucault’s notions of biopower and biopolitics I revisit my death by four words – “sensitive”, “controversial”, “inappropriate” and “immoral” – and my zombified rebirth. From the sovereign in the classic age to today, the power to ‘take life or let live’ has shifted from an omnipotent single bearer of the sword to many of their guards who use swords at will, that are sharper and double-edged. Power devolved in that sense appears as “a right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself; it culminated in the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it” (Foucault & Rabinow, 1984, p. 259). In the multi-cultural, pink-washed, modern liberal democracies, power appears to be free flowing. From prisons to psychiatry and medicine to Trudeau’s famous 2015 gender-balanced cabinet, to Pride parades, to multicultural spectacles, power sparkles through sweet measures of governance and surveillance. At the University codified with the allure of ‘education’ death can happen in a jiffy, while still letting one ‘live’. Such a cessation, or a reformed state of life, ranges massively from gender, to sexuality, to race, to class, to lower castes like mine, to a mix of all of them.

The CST created the problem of homosexuality being discussed in the classroom. It then utilized technologies to impose its rule by adding a new phrase on its website. The Foucauldian term, power/knowledge – that knowledge creates and is created by power –explains this action. While the CST Director apologized, underwent some positive spaces training, and continued to

thrive, I bore the brunt of her violence. I fell into a deep depression, for several years being epistemically violated by the psychiatric industry, being jobless, hopeless and lifeless. I died, alive.

The Re-birth: The Ascension of the Zombie

In order to theorize my status of living-dead, I first turn to Mbembe (2003), who began by summing up Foucault's concept of biopower: "to exercise sovereignty is to exercise control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power... *biopower* [hence is] that domain of life over which power has taken control" (p. 12). He then shifted the focus from the sovereign to the subject by questioning a) what makes the conditions conducive to kill, b) who the subject is that makes execution of the right to kill possible, and c) whether the notion of biopower is sufficient to understand the contemporary ways in which the political – under the guises of war, resistance, or combatting terror – makes the kill the sovereign's absolute and prime objective. Mbembe (2003) postulated necropolitics as a form of political making of spaces and subjectivities in the interstices of life and death. The colonial spaces, particularly slavery plantations, have been one of the earliest experimentations of biopolitics. in which the slave condition exerted a triple loss for the enslaved: loss of a home, loss of rights over their bodies, and loss of political status. As an instrument of labour, the enslaved must be "kept alive but in a *state of injury*... [thus] slave life, in many ways is a form of death-in-life" (p. 21). This draws similarities to my lost and disabled life.

Next, I turn to Haritaworn et al. (2014) who introduced queer necropolitics "as the concept-metaphor that illuminates and connects a range of spectacular and mundane forms of killing and or 'letting die' while simultaneously radically reimagining the meanings, purchase and stakes inherent in 'queerness' as a category of analysis and critique" (p. 4). They took different regimes, bodies, and instances in which gender, sexuality and kingship and the processes of confinement, removal and exhaustion in order to examine queer necropolitics. Their use of the adjective, 'queer' to situate necropolitics suggested two possibilities: 1) to reconfigure queerness in relation to an array of anti-

and non-formative forms of life and politics, and 2) to re-situate queer politics and capacities on embedded structural violence, as against the “deeply reactionary and colonizing projects of ‘giving voice’”. This in turn paves the way to contextualizing seemingly mundane forms of slow death and violence as illuminators of “struggles beyond the logic of capital accumulation and imperial plunder” (p. 5). Hence, they used diverse methodologies, including autoethnography. Haritaworn et al. (2014) were central, not only for me to understand my death by four words, but also to dismantle the grandeur of queer rights movements.

Maiming and the Sovereign Right to Repair

In the unfolding of my ‘zombie rebirth’ and formulating the background to theorize it, I turn to Puar (2017) who discussed the reality of maiming, first by extending Foucault’s foundational scheme of biopolitics and next, necropolitics (Mbembe, 2003). Citing Gaza as the world’s largest open-air prison, i.e., a besieged spatial entity, she argued that “the Israeli state manifests an implicit claim to the “right to maim” and debilitate Palestinian bodies and environments as a form of biopolitical control and as central to scientifically authorized humanitarian economy” (p. 128). Contrary to slow death, which conceptualizes through the trajectory of ‘let die’ or ‘make die’, “maiming functions as ‘will not let die’, and its supposed humanitarian complement, “will not make die”. Maiming masquerades as ‘let live’ when in fact it acts as ‘will not let die’”. (p. 139). By causing permanent bodily injuries – by destroying life-sustaining physical infrastructure such as water and shelter, and human infrastructure, such as engineers that rebuild and medical teams that care for wounded bodies – life is still let live, in a form of death. In shooting to maim, they replace the coordinates of ‘let die’ to ‘make live’.

Puar (2017) then expanded the biopolitics of debilitation to look at how Palestinian people’s availability for injury paved the way for settler-colonial occupation and expansion. She critiqued the nature of biopolitics fuelled by unending structures of settler colonialism. Thus, she highlighted

the nature of settler colonial occupations – as a well-organized structure – to expose the orchestration of Israeli state-led ‘life while being dead’ of Palestinian peoples. Under the guise of sovereignty, right to kill is enacted as the right to disable and debilitate, which is hijacked by corporate actors of humanitarianism. Not only does this measure feed into the models of disaster capitalism, but also in order to make the debilitated lives of Gazans productive, the killer state then reserves and exercises the “sovereign ‘right to repair’” (p. 221).

Puar’s theorizing amplifies my learning of ongoing settler colonialism. As a settler-arrivant, through my frontline work, and merely by paying tax as a ‘law-abiding’ citizen-immigrant, I help the Canadian state to prevail. Next, I want to posit that the racist and homophobic violence I have faced in Canada and my coming to terms with a debilitated life of psychological injuries and scars that have been caused by the many ‘volunteers’ who had used their right to correct, ridicule and curse me, as both executors of making live and *repair*. They are omnipresent yet go unnoticed. Absorbing power from their state operatives of white supremacy and cis-heteropatriarchy they cause injuries to so many like myself as well as those who are *unlike* myself.

Yet, am I solely a victim in this settler-Canadian space? How have I, facing maiming, been implicated in injuring both those who have fled for safety and the guardians of this land? Once maimed, what happens next in the machinery of zombification?

Maiming – From Animacy to Tameability

Reflecting on the recovery from a chronic illness, and “feeling more live again”, Chen (2012) problematized the notion of being alive, or liveliness and different kinds of freedoms and agency. This led them to “reconsider the precise conditions of the application of “life” and “death,” the working ontologies and hierarchicalized bodies of interest” (p. 1), in relation to the biopolitics of contemporary life, particularly extending Mbembe’s necropolitics, the ‘living dead’, and Agamben’s ‘bare life’. They used animacy – the degree to which one is imagined to be alive,

whether human or animal – to question the production of humanness, particularly with reference to animality, nationality, race, security, environment, and sexuality. In so doing they disrupted the binary systems that include life and death, subject and object, human and animal, and so on.

Hierarchies of animacy prompt me to investigate who is meant to be fully alive and who is let live in the form of the living dead as Puar (2015 & 2017) theorized. Chen (2012) added, whose bodies do count and whose lives or deaths are even discussed. Examples are plenty, from Indigenous, Black bodies to the racialized bodies of the Middle East, to the displaced from war zones and climate disasters. Their deaths are justified for the credible lives that are animated based on their white, Christian, and cis-heterosexuality that Chapman and Withers (2019) cited as eugenics. Chen (2012) argued that the givens of death are already racialized, sexualized, and animated in specific biopolitical formations. “Anima, animus, animal, and animate are... not vagarities or templatic zones of undifferentiated matter, but in fact work as complexly racialized and indeed humanized notions” (p. 7). In fact, animacies and animality as well as animacies of animality are intriguing connections to explore in relation to racialized and dehumanized queer bodies, not only in the context of living dead but also how they are let live, in the form of living, walking, and working dead: *zombies*. Chen (2012) asking “what happens when animals appear on human landscapes” (p. 89), suggested that thinking critically about animality paves the way for queered and racialized notions of animacy, because it is the animality that has been treated as a prime mediator when defining ‘human’ as well as ‘animal’.

In the hierarchy of animacy, animals occupy an important space among the animate humans. From the dog shows that scrutinize the dogs’ eugenics to tamed elephants to those whom humans consume, animals have a complex kinship with human animals, yet as under-developed, tamed, and wild, sub-species. Likewise, queer bodies, queer sex, and sexualities are immoralized and animalized. The CST director at the University highlighted the immorality of homosexuality and

got away with it. Black and racialized queer bodies are happily tortured, ‘cleansed’ through various ritualistic performances, crushed and amputated – I have met many clients with scars from genital mutilations, assaults and at times being set on fire. Not long ago, Canada only conditionally made ‘conversion therapy’ (or torture) illegal.

Borrowing from Chen’s (2012) question, quoted earlier, I ask, what happens when animalized (and zombified) humans appear in exalted human landscapes? In fact, they are brought in, and allowed to remain to exalt those occupying the stolen lands, in order for Canada to gain its safe haven status. Next, to maintain such landscapes, the animalized humans must be kept in their form of animality. They are put to work, policed, disposed off and forgotten, or, allowed to live in a state of death, i.e., zombified so that all they are commanded and permitted to do is to obey.

The Rising Zombie – Put to Work

My rebirth, or ‘integration’, began with studying mental health counselling and as a frontline worker. I conducted individual and group resettlement support sessions. I assisted asylum seekers to become Convention Refugees, Permanent Residents and Canadian Citizens. I provided support letters and witnessed refugee determinations. I presented at numerous venues, organized Pride events and group outings. I have been recognized for my work.

In my new full circle of life, I transitioned myself from being a lost service user to an activist and a service provider. In activist and academic spaces, I questioned the violence and hypocrisy in the Canadian queer refugee processes as well as Canada’s safe haven claims. Yet, in my frontline work, I championed the same processes that I questioned. My existential crisis stemmed from realizing how my work and activism have legitimized settler colonialism.

How does the market swallow my desires for justice, and reproduce them in humanitarian-sounding, zombie sequels to maximize profit? Can I re-live my multiple settler-selves – disruptor, promoter, or anywhere in between – in ways that do not harm Indigenous Peoples and others?

Zygmunt (2003), cautioning about the market economies that pervade communities and societies, stated that “today’s agonies of *homo sexualies* are those of *homo consumens*” (p. 49). His analysis challenging the drive for economic growth that mimicked the homo-sexes and others happily shouldering the expansion of market economies: “*Homo oeconomicus* and *homo consumens* are men and women without social bonds. They are the ideal residents of the market economy and the types that make the GNP watchers happy” (p. 69). This premise paves ways for the ‘progress’ of the queer from homophobia to homonationalism that made all attempts to stop QuAIA from marching in the 2010 Toronto Pride parade. As McCaskell (2016) exposed, the Toronto Pride parade is now infested with many of the traditional adversaries of queer struggles: “the Conservative party, churches, some of the biggest corporations and banks, the police, and the military” (p. 1). It was not surprising that the champion trans rights *consumen* and some of her white *homo consumen* followers took the side of those traditional adversaries at the white ‘activist’ venue in Toronto. The queer rights discourse peaked at homonationalism, which Puar (2007) theorized as the ascendancy of white supremacist queers with national recognition and inclusion that is “contingent upon the segregation and disqualification of racial and sexual others from the national imaginary... [i.e.] national homosexuality” (p. 2). It is in the project of US empire building, she explained, that this brand of queerness operates as a regulatory script for both of its normative and racial forms that globalize the ascendancy of whiteness. The biopolitics of homonationalism surfaces not only by the recognition of a national homosexual and the proliferation of racial-sexual subjects, “but more significantly, through the simultaneous engendering and disavowal of *populations* of sexual-racial others who need not apply” (p. 2). I realize that my being recognized, animalized, maimed and made-live simultaneously on this stolen land denote my contribution to the proliferation of racialized sexual subjecthood while through my frontline work, I am being reused to scrutinize the populations of sexual-racial others.

Kinsman (2018), Murray (2016), Mulé (2020) and Forbear (2014) probed Canada's safe haven claims while policing its borders and filtering LGBTQ+ refugees through a rigorous refugee apparatus upon entry. They stressed that social relations under neoliberal capitalism have reshaped immigration, refugee and border policies that organize such contradictions. Murray (2016) stated that discourses of gender and sexuality are critical to maintaining liberal and illiberal forms of power and dominance that drive capitalism, secularism and civil society, tied to Canada's settler colonial and white supremacist identity. For Greensmith and Giwa (2013) the eliminationist logic of settler colonialism, while dictating terms on Indigenous Peoples, is deployed to re-condition queer and trans communities into white-normative same-sex politics and practices. The portrayal of Canada as the global safe haven for LGBTQ+ refugees emerged from this context, positing an 'undisputable' prescription for the racialized queer-other. They should civilize themselves by becoming respectable and legalized, docile homonationalists. Embracing 'Canadian values', they should celebrate its multi-cultural spectacle in their gruelling journey towards Canadian citizenship. In exchange, they should allow the residual strengths of their feeble bodies to be sucked out by the market. Strategically positioned corporate outlets, from meat factories to Amazon, at the peripheries of Toronto where LGBTQ+ refugees can afford to live, suck their queer blood for the lowest possible wage. As Ravecca and Upadhyay (2013) put it, "liberalism is re-inscribed (and many times trafficked) in discourses of sexuality, gay and post-gayness" (p. 359). Particularly, the move to reassemble the queer-other as a subservient class of homonationalists denotes the imperialist logic, fostered by neoliberal capitalism. This vicious process – re-queering the already queer, the mechanisms that killed me, my re-birth and made-live – I have mastered and been mastered by.

Providing a Marxist analysis of sexual capitalism, Reynolds (2018) began by remarking that fundamentally social relations are formed, in contemporary capitalist societies, by class struggles in which the flow of capital over labour dominates. Structures and discourses that promote and

constrain sexuality and sexual politics situate unequal institutional pedagogies, power, and knowledge dynamics not merely as key drivers, but “as the hegemonizing strategies by which class power is retained, consent is manufactured and new opportunities for capitalist markets are produced” (p. 700). This is simply because, “the bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society” (Marx & Engels, 1848/1992). The cis-heteropatriarchal family as the basic unit of not only (settler) social relations but also of labour, authenticated by intertwined social, legal, economic, and religious apparatuses, which dictate socio-sexual and gender-ed behaviours, stemmed from this inherent binding to capital. Hence the ‘normal’ – from social conduct to sexualities – are marketed and should always be marketable. In my journey from being a closeted sissy-boy-faggot to an out and proud promoter of settler-homonationalism, I have reused my sexuality and my lived experiences to both decode and recode social, political, and legal regulatory apparatuses that legitimize the genocide of Indigenous Peoples. In this spectacular society, the intensity of commodification peaks where commodification becomes life itself, hence all our social relations. The Spectacle absorbs humanity and secretes zombies, as being subjugated by the capital. We end up as “the true reflection of the production of things, and the false objectification of the producers” (Debord, 1983, para. 16). From bottled water to packeted soil, to rainbow flags, to dogs and cats, to kidneys and wombs, to vaginas, and rectums, to our *labour* – racialized, re-queered, re-civilized and made live – are sucked into this black hole and discharged as residues. Through my work I have ended up as a zombie, breeding zombies in this grand landscape that has progressed from homophobia to homonationalism to *homocapitalism*.

A Life Beyond Zombie Sequels?

Questioning what it means to (re)claim the commons, Fortier (2017) unsettled the commons by situating social movements and social justice struggles on *stolen land*. Staying in this unsettling

is important in undoing my existence on this land. I have subscribed to the proliferation of settler-led ‘reconciliation porno’, in which settlers in privileged settler-led spaces attempt to move to innocence, for example, by tokenistic Land Acknowledgements.

Alfred (2017), emphasized that for Indigenous Peoples, it is about *land*. He ridiculed the settlers’ rushing to reconciliation as an invitation to share in the spoils of Indigenous nations’ subjugation and dispossession – a false promise that cannot happen without ending colonial genocide. “By fraud, abuse, violence and sheer force of numbers, white society has forced us into the situation of being refugees and trespassers in our own homelands and we are prevented from maintaining the physical, spiritual and cultural relationships necessary for our continuation as nations” (p. 11). Coulthard (2014) reiterated that through force, fraud and ‘negotiations’, colonial domination is devoted to acquiring land and resources that provide the material and spiritual sustenance of Indigenous societies, as well as the foundation of the colonial state, settlement and capitalist development. He emphasized that “territoriality is settler colonialism’s specific, irreducible element” (p. 7). Land that sustains Indigenous worlds with a place-based identity is at the root of all conflicts of settler colonialism. For settlers, land is *terra nullius* – a commodity that is personally owned, built on, sold on, reduced to individual ownership and properties, while for Indigenous Peoples land is existential, evoking profound meanings (Lowman and Barker, 2015).

Examining the relationship between settler colonialism and Indigenous women’s life and death, Simpson (2016) renamed the Canadian state as a *man*. This man’s project of governance is gendered and murderous. Women have always been rendered worthless, murdered and sent ‘missing’, because of who they are and what they have taken care of: land, reproduction, kinship and governance that defy heteropatriarchal and Victorian rules or coordinates of descent. “States do not always have to kill: its citizens can do that for it” (para. 6). Dispossession also happens as erasure or disappearance.

Driskill (2014), a Cherokee two-spirit poet expounded that they have not only been removed from their homelands, but also from their sovereign erotic self and their first homeland, the body. “We were stolen from our bodies/ We were stolen from our homes” (p. 53). In Indigenous worlds, land, home and body, sexualities and gender are intrinsically interwoven into a unified whole. Two-spirit is a sacred expression of sex and gender that is completely different from that of settler LGBTQ+ movements. Driskill (2004) further explained that they are not necessarily queer or ‘transgender’ in Cherokee contexts because the differences are not seen in the same vein as in Euro-American contexts. “I am simply the gender I am... It is only within the rigid gender regimes of white America that I become Trans or Queer” (p. 52).

Bryd (2020) discussed the peculiar and fragmented closeness between Indigenous studies and queer studies. The disconnect is sometimes ontological, or it could be the refusal to embrace Indigenous spiritualities, embodied identities, kinship structures, languages, genders and sexualities. Such refusal stems from the settler roots of queerness, including within the terrains of queer of colour who still have a strange dialectical liaison with their colonial Master. For example, ‘colour’ exists and is justified in the (omni)presence of whiteness. Queer even as a term exists in the language with embodied meaning of ‘the other’ however it is reclaimed. Thus, queer of colour in a bizarre sense cannot escape from its shackles as long as they are ‘queer’, ‘queered’ and ‘coloured’. Knowing this at once initiates liberation: I should be a queer or queered of colour only in order to be *not*. Bryd (2020), quoted Driftpile Cree poet and scholar Billy-Ray, to highlight that “it is in the unthinkability between queer and Indigenous that some of us stage our lives. We are both nothing and everything at the same time” (p. 106).

Clearing the Path: Doubleweaving

Driskill (2010) reprimanded the settler-led new queer studies that sidelined their hope of bringing Native studies and queer studies into critical conversations. Too often, people of color are

as complicit as Euro-Americans in un-seeing Native people. From the liberal dispossessing acts of ‘wreckconciliation’ to critical queer studies, to queer of colour analyses, Indigenous peoples and histories and the ongoing colonization happening on Indigenous land are sidelined or “included only marginally, when included at all” (p. 70). Two-Spirit people are nominally taken in to ‘adorn’ Pride festivities and mega sport events, leading to devaluing their social, cultural, political, and spiritual roles, thus legitimizing homonationalism (Da Costa, 2020; Sykes, 2016). This interjection fissures my ‘progressive’ Pride parading with LGBTQ+ refugees.

Brown (2020) situated settler colonialism as an ideology that conditions the development of public memory, and the formation of modern sexuality and queer subjects in North America. Following Morgensen (2011), he cited queer progress, queer freedom and queer memory being placed within the paradigm of nation building. Based on Freeman (2010), Da Costa (2020), underscored the temporal and spatial aspects of homonationalism as crononormativity: “the biopolitical processes enacted through time, space, and subject. When mobilized in and through homonationalism, these processes work to bind white queers to movement and change, while folding QTBIPOC into a symbolic site of regression and perversion” (p. 435). Drawing upon the thematic links between crononormativity and homonationalism, she argued that the concerted whitewashing and linearization of Pride parades animate imperialist zones of queer belonging, inciting a pseudo progress. Thus, Black Lives Matter halting the 2016 Toronto Pride parade critically disrupted the crononormative temporalization of homonationalism, and “(re)imagine[d] queer temporalities that exist beyond anti-Blackness, genocide, and orientalism, the same pillars of white supremacy that constrain not just Pride parades but, rather, all of Western society” (p. 454).

Settler colonialism is biopower in that elimination grounded in Western law does not merely eliminate but also reproduce (zombie) life (Morgensen, 2011). This was seen through the world-wide ‘ecstatic’ lives of all colours and creeds gripped by the coronation of King Charles III. There

is so much work to do, as any metaphorization of decolonization evasively moves settlers to innocence, reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and salvage settler futurity (Tuck & Yang, 2012). This is exactly how the zombie nurseries continue to mutate – from “‘elimination by elimination’ to ‘elimination by assimilation’ to ‘elimination by recognition’” (Hallenbeck, et al. 2016, p. 114).

Resistance to five centuries-long colonization isolates Indigenous Peoples from all others, including the Black and racialized, on this stolen land. Settlers of colour face oppression and murder, but not colonial *genocide* on the parcels of stolen land they own, rent, lease and at times thrive on. Besides, Black, racialized, queer, and accomplices of all kinds should form alliances for justice, through double-weaving, one solidifying the other and making their unity much stronger (Driskill, 2010). This is what redemption means, led by Two-Spirit people, as an “ongoing, radical resistance against colonialism that includes struggles for land redress, self-determination, healing historical trauma, cultural continuance, and reconciliation” (p. 69).

The Way Forward...

Chapman and Withers (2019) questioned, “how can we hold our responsibility to challenge capitalism, colonialism, the institutionalization of human relationships, the depoliticization of social problems, and the forces of interlocking oppression alongside the recognition that we’re complicit in these systems and will likely perpetuate them?” (pp. 355-356). Hence, what should I do?

Prefigurative Politics

Prefigurative politics is about actively creating structures and relationships we are aimed at living so that the mechanisms we utilize in our organizing, the institutions we create through such actions and the ideals we embody become one and the same. This echoes Maritimerine (2022). “We believe our current projects and pursuits must mirror – and in mirroring, become – the world we want to emerge from the ashes of capitalism. In short, our method consists of embodying the world we dare to dream”. The many modes on how collectively to cultivate and win our social justice

dreams are enshrined in disqualified and displaced grassroots organizing. Stewardships of anti-colonial community practices and anti-capitalist workers initiatives, and, matriarchal Indigenous traditions of collective care have been happening everywhere for generations (Walia, 2013). Transformative justice, initiated by Indigenous communities has emerged as contemporary prefigurative organizing – from Water Protectors to the Land Back movement to Idle No More.

Walcott (2021) explained that the spirit of abolitionism founded by Rastafarians in Barbados who fought to liberate themselves from slavery in the Americas. The Rastafarians’ abolition was an ongoing movement that would not be done away with until Black people from all over were free, equal, and safe. Correcting the criminal justice system as criminal punishment system, he stressed that property must be abolished if Black people are to be free. His words reconfigure my envisioning of a just world. “We do not want just to abolish the police and the courts; we want to abolish everything. We want freedom and we know and understand, in a way that our own history has taught us, that abolition is the only route towards it” (p. 14).

Thus, I should qualify myself to be a co-conspirator of justice in order to erase the zombie nursery from its substructure. Cornassel (2008) underscored the importance of the guardianship of land as being integral to *sustainable* self-determination. He cautioned that the desire for (genocidal) state recognition of political and legal rights, without giving back land, without asserting community-based powers of sustainable self-determination has only exacerbated the collective trauma of some Indigenous Peoples within the same status quo. Sustainable self-determination restores Indigenous ways of life. This includes spirituality as the highest pillar of politics and interdependence as the base, responsibilities to natural world, evolving Indigenous livelihoods, food security, ceremonies of healing and community governance.

Coulthard (2014) provided an ethical framework as “grounded normativity”, which has situated Indigenous struggles against capitalist imperialism, not merely for land, but also by being

profoundly informed by what land teaches us through a plethora of interlaced living relationships. This framework is built upon, and in a way extends Marxist analysis by situating them with Indigenous Peoples' intrinsic connections to land across time and space. I am inspired by Coulthard's (2014) words, "for Indigenous nations to live, capitalism must die. And for capitalism to die, we must actively participate in the construction of Indigenous alternatives to it" (p. 73). The task is to invite, gather and nourish as many settlers as possible, including the being re-queered queer-other LGBTQ+ newcomers in the many spaces of exploitation, to actively support weaving the fabric of Indigenous workings against and beyond genocidal capitalism.

A Postscript... From Under the Lighthouse

With a *Calling* from 'Safe Haven'

I ran away from home – seven seas afar

Healed are the ribs broken, but will the pain, ever?

I'd be free, finally, I thought!

Wishful thinking, hahaha ☺

Do you know that

days can be darker
than nights?

How do you guess? How do you prepare?

when the kill is with a smile,
in broad daylight
while the universes flout it
with their eyes wide shut?

"Go back to where you came from
if you don't like it here!"

Expose 'their' Canada at your peril!

But who are they to command?

while being built on a lineage of
colonizers, robbers, gangsters, rapists and
liars – of some they call 'explorers'?

O'(ugh) Canada soaked in the blood
of children, girls, two-spirits, women and men

of the Guardians of this Land
oozing out of those genteel manners and
monotonic words!

No one is innocent – not even I:

the refugee, the displaced, as I am
implicated in this crime –

genocide of the First Peoples,
in my dream of citizenry acquired: 'Canadian' –
the multi-cultural, homonationalist,
docile and zombified!

White supremacy, cis-heteropatriarchy

racism, trans n' homophobic violence!

Leaching out of capitalism – neoliberal, Trumpism,
'Freedom Convoy', Space X, what's next?

When you hit the rock-bottom

rising up is all that's left!

So, we rally round and
fight back... to fortify

Resurgence – Indigenous,

for healing, caring, and peace

inter-dependence and collective care

life beyond the capital suffocating labour

Liberation, Hurrah!

Queering is that joy

Queering is that power

Queering is a way out, and back in

"Unite!" to shatter shackles. Indeed, Marx!

"One Step Forward, Two Steps Back." Salute Lenin!

Queer(+ing) for justice: nothing more, nothing *less!*

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