

Textured Activism: Affect Theory and Transformational Politics in Transnational Queer Palestine-Solidarity Activism

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Abstract

How do we conceptualize social and political transformation? What possibilities arise for our political imaginings when we examine the approaches and orientations of activist practice in the everyday? Using queer and affect theory, I examine dualistic thinking in social movement practices to propose a model for thinking about the ethics of solidarity in practice. I consider this model of solidarity through the texture of activism and by examining the everyday practices of solidarity in the queer Palestine movement.

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Résumé

De quelle façon concevons-nous la transformation sociale et politique? Quelles possibilités s'offrent à notre imagination politique lorsque nous examinons les approches et les orientations de l'activisme au quotidien? À l'aide de la théorie queer et de la théorie des affects, j'examine la pensée dualiste dans les pratiques des mouvements sociaux afin de proposer un modèle d'examen de l'éthique de la solidarité dans la pratique. Je considère ce modèle de solidarité selon la texture de l'activisme et en examinant les pratiques quotidiennes de la solidarité du mouvement queer palestinien.

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This paper considers our imaginings of social and political transformation through emergent social movements and theories of affect. Turning to the growing transnational queer Palestine-solidarity movement, I examine how affect theory can offer new considerations for transformational politics and solidarity activism. What possibilities arise from thinking about activism and transformation differently? What new approaches and orientations can we incorporate into both academic and activist work on contemporary movement building? Amidst a historical moment that is consumed with imagining change at the revolutionary, global, and mass movement level, I ask what it means to consider transformation as not simply a revolutionary process, but as a texture of life that structures our circulation through social and political fields.

In her book, *Touching Feeling*, Eve Sedgwick (2003) introduces the concept of *texture* as a technique for thinking about agency outside of dualistic thinking. Sedgwick's provocation to think differently about agency has far reaching implications, particularly if we use her work to reconsider how we interpret and narrate social movements. Extending Sedgwick's work on texture to my analysis of the transnational queer Palestine-solidarity movement (which I will refer to as "queer Palestine-solidarity" or "the queer Palestine movement" for brevity), I want evaluate what a textured reading of queer activism contributes to our approaches to social movement building. To consider the texture of activism is to consider the ethics of solidarity in practice: its productive and transformative possibilities simultaneous to its limits. Far from simply celebrating queer activism as the vanguard for utopian futurities, I want to propose a turn to the queer peripheries of larger social movements, such as the queer emergences in the larger Palestine-solidarity movement, to reflect on how linear narratives of progress in social change are shaken through the transformative politics of a textured approach to activism.¹

Queer theory and affect studies, sibling fields emergent from feminist, psychoanalytic, phenomeno-

logical, and poststructural theorizing, are in the business of shaking critical theories of the social and political. As both fields trouble binaries, queer theory and affect studies are two intellectual orientations invested in suspending dualistic models of thinking. Yet despite the discomfort these fields might have with binaries, it remains difficult for us to think and talk about justice in the everyday practices of social movements and activism apart from them. If oppositional politics are predicated on logics of good and bad, is there a way of building transformative practices beyond the promise of liberation, revolution, or utopia through textured transformations? Such a model must be receptive to the complex ways that social movements are negotiated through the space in between binary opposites.

To consider the affective life of activism—to consider the texture of activist movements—is to look to the everyday of activism. This is work that is already occurring within social movements, but rarely examined as the site of activist accomplishment. In turning to the texture of activism, I hope to redirect our attention in transformational politics towards the everyday movements of activist practices. I begin by considering the problem of dualisms, looking at both queer theory and affect studies to examine how both fields intervene in tropes of binary thinking emblematic of social movements. Next, I turn to the queer Palestine movement to reflect on the possibilities emergent in rethinking transformation through a textured reading. I conclude by examining how affect can attend to transformation and propose some considerations for work on social movements.

Dualisms and Transformations

Dualistic narratives, such as good/bad, dominated/liberated, and oppressed/privileged, circulate throughout contemporary activist cultures and social movements. As a legacy of the predominance of dualism in Western thought, these narratives have, on the one hand, served oppositional politics well, offering clear sites for interventions into the structures of injustice; on the other hand, however, dualistic narratives have stalled our ability to envision transformation when opposition becomes entrenched in subjugated identities (Brown 1995). As our models for transformation remain embedded in the logics of binary thinking, social movements eventually get stuck on the categories mo-

bilized for articulating injustice and asymmetry, even if these categories cease to serve us well. What happens when asymmetry becomes more symmetrical? When the conditions of subjugation have been transformed? Or, when the terms of subjugation need to be transformed in order to alleviate injustice?

The problem of binary thinking is not simply an intellectual concern, but primarily a concern about how to mobilize transformational politics under the conditions of neoliberalism. The neoliberal period, shaped by the conditions of globalization and the normalization of liberal values of individual freedom, produces a new set of challenges to movement building beyond the parameters of state repression alone. For Lisa Duggan (2003), “*privatization and personal responsibility...define the central intersections between the culture of neoliberalism and its economic vision*” (12), which has shifted the terms of politics away from redistributive goals towards increasingly consumptive models of equality compatible with capitalism. The insidious effects of neoliberalism collapse the social onto the individual, where personal experience supplants radical critique (Mohanty 2013, 971). The slip into depoliticized individualism is made possible because our intimacies and affective lives fall easily into the very logics we may oppose, where “we become libidinally and erotically invested in the status quo of mass lockdown...reproducing the racialized and sexualized economies of benevolence and exploitation that fortify so much of conservative, liberal, and even radical praxis” (Agathangelou, Bassichis, and Spira 2008, 137).

If neoliberal co-options of oppositional politics rescript liberatory projects into the very folds of global capitalism, as Anna Agathangelou, Daniel Bassichis, and Tamara Spira (2008) have argued, then we need new tools for thinking about transformational politics. Although dualisms are not exclusive to neoliberalism, our conceptual reliance on dualistic thinking facilitates these slippages in the neoliberal period, since the translation of oppositional subjectivity into inclusion is made easier by binaries of inclusion and exclusion. Sedgwick (2003) suggests that our investment in dualistic frames of thought, such as repression and liberation, trap us in a discursive field that misses key ways of seeing and interpreting how agency functions (12). Sedgwick is concerned with our impulses towards essentializing anti-essentialist discourses, which she sees playing

out in approaches to deconstruction and gender theory. Drawing on the underlying contradiction in Foucault's work on the repressive hypothesis, she suggests that our attachments to repression and hegemony versus liberation narrow our ability to conceive of agency that is not reactive. Instead, Sedgwick argues that it is "the middle ranges of agency that offer space for effectual creativity and change" (13). Her proposal that we think through the middle ranges, rather than the extremities of the repression/liberation dichotomy, intervenes into tropes that both theorists and activists have relied on for articulating transformational politics.

Reflecting on the common critical perspectives that center on logics of being somehow outside of sites of critique—concepts such as "behind," "beyond," or "beneath"—Sedgwick (2003) argues that these approaches to critique continue to rely on dualistic logics, which are only capable of imagining possibility in fantasies of egalitarianism. Instead, she offers the analytic approach of *beside*, which "comprises a wide range of desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating, rivaling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, aggressing, warping, and other relations" (8). As an alternative to a model that calls for our liberation through inclusion into the neoliberal order, Sedgwick's proposition invites us to articulate agency and change alongside the dominant order of neoliberalism. Coupled with the social position of the margins, Sedgwick's use of *beside* can be extended as a tool for both articulating injustice and reshaping the very borders of the inclusion/exclusion binary. This approach both roots transformational practices in the daily realities of neoliberalism's order and unhinges our imaginaries from those routines that keep us embedded in dualistic logics.

Sedgwick's (2003) proposal to think through the middle ranges of agency is not a simple dismissal of notions of difference, such as identity; instead, she suggests that we need to recognize how the discursive field of identity shapes reality and respond through nondualistic approaches to understanding subjectivity, agency, and change (12). She suggests that this nondualistic approach attends to the texture of daily life and to the affective processes through which we encounter the world (17). If we take cue from Sedgwick's work on the middle ranges, how might we deploy new models for imagining transformation that do not fall back on nar-

atives that only chart the progress of activism through the singular and idealized transition from repression to liberation?

To think about oppositional politics alongside repression/liberation is especially difficult because the foundational narratives of social movements rely on the binary of subjugation versus liberation for articulating injustice. My suggestion here is not that we should abandon claims of subjugation or the call for liberation, but that we might reconsider these claims as points of encounter for engaging in transformative processes, rather than as conclusions, goals, or the sole destinations for social change. This may seem abstract—and, indeed, the thought experiment of thinking non-dualistically is a difficult abstraction—however, to think through the middle ranges is to turn our attention to the more mundane victories of social movements. I turn to queer theory coupled with affect theory to examine how these theories offer a flexibility to subjectivity and agency which open up to the middle range in concrete, rather than purely abstract terms.

Queer and affect theories employ logics that lend well to thinking alongside dualism, especially when read with theories of solidarity and transformational politics. Academic work on social movements and solidarity has largely been dominated by its disciplinary origins in sociology (Ruggiero and Montagna 2008), political economy (Mouffe 1995; Calhoun 2002; Hardt and Negri 2004; Spinner-Halev 2008), and philosophy (Scholz 2008; Pensky 2008). As fields on the margins outside of traditional disciplines, affect studies and queer theory offer new interpretative tools for thinking about social change. Queer theory and affect studies are fields that attend to both the individual and the collective, while neither reducing one to the other nor imagining them as discrete. For instance, queer theory approaches sexual subjectivity and desire through both psychoanalytic and social lenses; similarly, affect studies attends to the relationship between experience, emergence, and subjectivity through encounters across the self, the other, and spatial fields.

Ann Cvetkovich (2011) proposes that queer theory and affect studies are coextensive fields at the same time that they are heterogeneous (172). This heterogeneity is perhaps best highlighted as a relationship of ambivalence that emerges out of poststructural critique, but manifests as an investment in the multiple

frames that both fields invite. Queerness's legacy is that of disruption, discomfort, and the failure to properly fit (Halberstam 2011). Likewise, affect is so attractive a framework precisely because it cannot be attended to as a homogenous, coherent, or fixed approach (Gregg and Seigworth 2010). In each case, however, this ambivalence serves these frameworks well, speaking to the complexity of social life, rather than stabilizing our ability to "know" the field. Indeed, queer theory and affect studies are so appealing to contemporary critical scholars, such as Sedgwick, Cvetkovich, Heather Love (2011) and Jasbir Puar (2007), precisely because they offer us alternatives to the prescribed frameworks commonly used for making sense of the world.

Love (2011) argues that, "the semantic flexibility of queer—its weird ability to touch almost everything—is one of the most exciting things about it...the word still maintains its ability to move, to stay outside, and to object to the world as it is given" (182). Through the simultaneous attentiveness to the injuries of structural violences and the attending claims to justice, queer theory holds the capacity to suspend the binary logics that root and fix those claims into models of good and bad, liberation and repression. Further, Judith Butler (1993) argues that, "if the term 'queer' is to be a site of collective contestation, the point of departure for a set of historical reflections and futural imaginings, it will have to remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes" (19). The shared orientations and flexibility across queer theory broadly and Sedgwick's method of texture specifically, opens to different ways of imagining and articulating the practices of transformational movements beyond repression/liberation. Sedgwick's analytic approach of texture is oriented to queer's framework, one situated *beside* normative systems and *across* the middle ranges of agency. I turn now to an examination of the queer Palestine movement, a site that both reveals and troubles how we might re-imagine transformational politics in our contemporary moment through a textured approach to activism.

Transnational Queer Solidarity

The emergence of the queer Palestine movement over the last decade has marked a particularly compelling new frame for re-imagining transforma-

tional politics under the conditions of contemporary globalization and neoliberalism. Converging with Palestine-based queer and sexual rights organizations such as ASWAT, alQaws, Pinkwatching Israel, and PQBDS,² transnational queer solidarity groups have multiplied across North America and Europe, often (though not exclusively) under the name Queers Against Israeli Apartheid in groups based in Toronto, New York, Seattle, and Vancouver.³ Solidarity across these diverse groups, both in terms of geography and political ideology, is complex and I am unable to offer a survey of their work here. Instead, I focus on the discursive techniques of the transnational, rather than localized aspects of this movement, to foreground a textured approach to activism that uncouples the success of social movements, such as the queer Palestine movement, from the liberation of the subjects of solidarity. The transnational, as gestured to in the cross-bordered geography of the concept, lends itself conceptually to the middle range or in-between. Cutting across the borders of the nation, regional geography, and social identities, the transnational is a kind of middle range, anchored across multiple locations geographically and abstracted through the discursive field of solidarity politics, cultures of globalization, and transnational flows.⁴

In November 2012, I participated in the first gathering of the queer Palestine movement at the 2012 World Social Forum: Free Palestine. This gathering, called *Queer Visions at the World Social Forum*, joined transnational solidarity activists and Palestinian activists from across the Middle East, Europe, and North America for the first time. Drawing on the public documents produced during the meetings of the *Queer Visions* gathering, I argue that we should turn to these moments in social movement building as key sites for imagining transformational possibilities. My aim here is twofold: first, to highlight emergent practices of queer social movement building in a transnational context, which center on social change aside from the liberation of the subject; and second, to offer a textured interpretive lens for articulating transformational politics for social movements more generally in a neoliberal era. The generative possibilities of activism in the queer Palestine movement emerge in four ways: by side stepping the logics of inclusion; through a push towards the heterogeneity and multiplicity of struggles in movement building; by re-visioning transformation beyond the

structures of our current social order; and by negotiating identity ambivalently. I want to expand on each of these features to draw out some of the ways that a textured reading of the queer Palestine solidarity movement and its transnational forms of queer solidarity can reveal new considerations for transformational politics and solidarity activism.

First, by side stepping the logics of inclusion, queer Palestine-solidarity activism mobilizes a form of queer intervention that foregrounds critiques of colonialism, racism, and neoliberalism simultaneous to its queer politic (Organizing Committee of Queer Visions 2012). In her presentation at the World Social Forum, Haneen Maikey (2012) articulated the struggle for queer Palestinians in the solidarity movement outside of the terms of inclusion, by arguing that the political project for queer Palestinians is not about “gay rights or identity politics or struggle for acceptance. We don’t want anyone to accept us” (n.p.). Maikey’s refusal of the terms of inclusion, such as those based on calls for acceptance, does not preclude a queer intervention; rather, the refusal suggests that the queer intervention is an analytic, rather than subjective one—to include an analytic intervention in a political struggle, rather than a call for belonging.⁵ As an intervention, rather than an assertion of stable identity or belonging, this gesture unsettles the normative call for inclusion of sexual rights movements and turns us to the political stakes *beside* those of sexual liberation/repression.

The distinction in the language of queer intervention is key, since the terms for transformation are not directed towards the Israeli state’s inclusion of queer Palestinians nor the call for Palestinian civil society to accept queers. Instead, the queer intervention that side steps inclusion brings to the forefront the already active role “of Palestinian queers and people fighting against pinkwashing as part of the broader Palestine liberation and solidarity movement” (Queer Visions 2012b). The call for queer solidarity in this case is predicated differently from normative sexual rights discourses, which rely on a model that expands liberal rights to include those sexual subjects who have been expelled; what Lisa Duggan (2002) has described as the neoliberalization of gay rights movements emblematic of homonormativity (179). Instead, queer solidarity calls for a dismantling of the very systems of colonial and imperial intervention to achieve transformation, rather than a call for solidar-

ity based on sexual liberation and queer belonging. This does not mean that negotiations and claims to belonging and inclusion are irrelevant to queer Palestinian subjectivity; rather, it points to the strategic distinction in movement discourse that predicates the terms of transnational solidarity on the basis of analytic intervention through queer critique, rather than identification with the sexual subjectivities of queer Palestinians.

Second, through a push towards the heterogeneity and multiplicity of struggles in movement building, the queer intervention disrupts the homogenizing impulses of large social movements that flatten transformational politics and embed social movements in binary thinking. This flattening occurs when movements become over-determined by a single axis of transformation, such as the focus on decolonization in the absence of gender or sexual rights. Transnational feminist critique has offered one of the strongest bodies of work that examine the problems of homogenization in feminist movements, particularly through the marginalization of racialized women (hooks 2000; Mohanty 2003). In keeping with these forms of feminist critique, the queer Palestine movement intervenes by simultaneously investing in the decolonization struggle of the Palestine liberation movement and refusing the homogenization of the larger movement’s terms for justice. In the *Pinkwashing Statement* video (Queer Visions 2012a), which documents the declaration presented by *Queer Visions* at the World Social Forum general assembly, queer activists intervened in the larger movement by injecting a queer analysis into the statements made at the general assembly. This demonstrates that, rather than simply calling for the addition of queer representation in the Palestine movement, the queer emergence within the larger solidarity movement refuses the normalization of a homogenous struggle, by insisting that the World Social Forum recognize pinkwashing as a key strategy of Israeli state practices.⁶ This critique exemplifies a middle range intervention, which simultaneously contends with the project of liberation, while at the same time, suspending an investment in representational freedom for articulating political agency.

Third, queer interventions in the movement interrupt the nationalist and normative claims that are replicated in the larger Palestine-solidarity and liberation movements through patriarchal and heteronormative nationalisms that place burdens of reproductive fu-

turity onto the bodies of women. The queer movement thus has a substantive role in disrupting the normative claims of masculinist nationalisms, by challenging heteronormativity and patriarchy in anti-colonial movements and offering textured models of political intervention uncoupled from stable categories of nationalism and gender essentialism. Although a substantial portion of the queer Palestine movement's intervention relies on a queer critique of Israeli state pinkwashing practices, which use gay rights to draw attention away from state violence, the queer critique manifests through an explicit intervention into the "fight against racism, Islamophobia, and forms of sexual and bodily oppressions including patriarchy, sexism, homophobia and transphobia in all societies" (Queer Visions 2012b). In connecting state and bodily violence in the queer intervention, the *Queer Visions* statement pushes against the current social order to call for different forms of transformations beyond a single axis.

Lastly, I want to draw attention to the way that sexuality and sexual identity are deployed in the queer solidarity movement. In keeping with the refusal of inclusion discussed above, queer interventions resist the impulse to mobilize around claims of sexual identity as the primary way of conceptualizing transformation. Instead, the queerness of these sites of activism resides in the disruptions and tensions that queer activists interject into normative narratives of national belonging and subjectivity. Here, queer activism mobilizes against practices of homonormativity and homonationalism to challenge the dominant narratives that shape both hegemonic relations and dominant discourses in social movements.

Puar's (2007) concept of homonationalism builds on Duggan's (2002) work on homonormativity, which describes the neoliberalization of sexual subjectivity. Homonationalism furthers Duggan's critique of the neoliberal shift in sexual subjectivity in the West, by coupling the idea of normative claims from homosexual subjects into state inclusion with mobilizations of liberal and normative queers as exceptional subjects of the state, in contrast to queer deviants (e.g., the terrorist) as threats to the state (Puar 2007, 38–39). Similarly, Agathangelou, Bassichis, and Spira (2008) highlight the idea of *affective economies*, a concept that is kin to Puar's homonationalism, but which foregrounds how the seduction into neoliberal subjecthood functions.

While Puar locates the homonationalist in the crux of economic mobility and civil recognition, Agathangelou, Bassichis, and Spira offer a more affective explanation of the homonationalist subject. For them,

the circulation and mobilization of feelings of desire, pleasure, fear, and repulsion utilized to seduce all of us into the fold of the state—the various ways in which we become invested emotionally, libidinally, and erotically in global capitalism's mirages of safety and inclusion. We refer to this as a process of seduction to violence that proceeds through false promises of an end to oppression and pain. It is precisely these affective economies that are playing out as gay and lesbian leaders celebrate their own new-found equality only through the naturalization of those who truly belong in the grasp of state captivity. (122)

For Puar and Agathangelou, Bassichis, and Spira, the key to understanding the power of hegemonic adaptability is to understand how subjectivity and identification emerge and are reconfigured through affective relations. How we belong, and how we desire to belong, are not fixed notions in space and time. Rather, belonging is textured: it is struggled for (such as in the sexual liberation and gay rights movements); it is seduced (in the case of the neoliberalization of sexuality); and it is contested (in the cases of queer resistance movements). The transnational queer Palestine solidarity movement highlights the tension across all three of the above processes, between the call for rights, the cooption into neoliberalism, and the disruption of both these claims in the realm of queer ambivalence.

As Agathangelou, Bassichis, and Spira (2008) have suggested, the impulse to be seduced into the fold of hegemonic systems is at play in sexual rights movements. Thus, a queer politics must attend to those affective ways that we desire to belong, at the same time that it attends to the complex workings of colonialism, patriarchy, capitalism, and other frames that structure normative life. In thinking about the texture of the emergent queer Palestine solidarity movement, I want to draw attention to the subtle practices that new forms of transnational queer activism employ in their transformational projects. In particular, I am interested in how queer ambivalence is teased out in the discursive practices of this social movement in ways that simultaneously attend to the pragmatics of move-

ment building and the flexibility of what Sedgwick (2003) calls the middle ranges—of desiring, twisting, attracting, warping. I turn next to a deeper reading of affect theory to consider how this coupling between queer activism and theories of affect can expand the terms of how we articulate transformative possibilities in social movements.

Affect, Transformation, and Movements

Turning to affect for thinking about social movements and transformational politics invites us to consider how we negotiate the conditions of injustice and the communities of belonging that we attach ourselves to and push against the limits of. Affects govern the realm of our encounters—encounters with the world, with ourselves—they structure how we are moved and move through the world. Affect theory raises questions about what roots us in belonging, at the same time that it constantly encounters the uncomfortable limits of belonging. That we can never fully belong and never accept non-belonging is the paradox intrinsic to social life, and it is the oscillation between these that the world of affect attends to. Being unsettled and disturbed by our encounters, engaging in confrontation and eliciting change are all mediations between our affective responses and the social world. Between each encounter, we shift, adapt, move, and transform in our negotiation through life.

When Sedgwick (2003) asks us to think non-dualistically, to look to the in-between of repression-vs-liberation to find the creative forms of agency that move us socially (12), she invites us to think about those moments, practices, and transformations that move us from one configuration of social relations to others. Similarly, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987) suggest another model for the space of the in-between, through the concept of the plateau: “A plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end. A rhizome is made of plateaus” (21). In their turn to rhizomatic thinking, Deleuze and Guattari offer an alternative framework for thinking, one that is not invested in the linearity of modernist notions of space, time, or progress. Instead, they build a narrative framework rooted in a *nomadic*⁷ approach to thought, attentive to multiplicity and heterogeneity. Affect theory is thus oriented towards the middle, to the in-between.

In social movement practices, the in-between constitutes both the intensified and mundane dimensions of transformational projects. For instance, in Toronto, controversy over the use of the term *Israeli apartheid* reveals the shifts and resonances of textured activist practices. Whereas a binary model would look at the attempts to ban the term and the ensuing victories thwarting these attempts as examples of repression and activist success, a textured approach considers what shifts and changes resonate between these moments of intensity. The resonance of conflict not only impacts victories and failures, but alters the very fabric of daily life—normalizing new orientations or discursive fields in the form of critique of Israeli state practices. These types of transformation are often the hidden dimensions of social change, whereby the space in-between grounds new language and new modes of being that open to other transformative possibilities during other moments of intensity, such as times of war.

As a theory that turns to the in-between, those moments and configurations post-encounter and pre-foreclosure, affect proposes a rethinking of the boundaries and limits of the subject and the social. According to Teresa Brennan (2004), “we are not self-contained in terms of our energies. There is no secure distinction between the ‘individual’ and the ‘environment’ ...affects are not received or registered in a vacuum” (6). If we are always circulating and being moved by our encounters to each other and the spaces we circulate in, it follows that our understanding of social movements must also consider the affective registers of transformative politics. To ask questions about how transformative subjectivities emerge and what these kinds of subjectivities produce becomes crucial for rethinking how we can engage in transformation.

Affect theory is generally articulated through two streams. First, affect is used in collaboration with emotion—the psychic and social circulation of feelings in response to encounters. Here, affects like hate, rage, anger, love, happiness, and other feelings become sites for understanding other social mechanisms at play. Sara Ahmed (2004) argues that affects are those qualities that circulate and stick to objects, imbuing them with meaning that elicits feeling in our encounters: “Objects become sticky, saturated with affects, as sites of personal and social tension” (126). Ahmed invites us to blur the line between affect and emotion to reveal the conditions

of feeling that shape our encounters within the neoliberal moment. Her recent work on happiness examines how feeling mediates belonging and structures of racialization, where the failure to let go of “bad” feelings attached to experiences of subjugation come to signify a failed integration into multiculturalism under the terms of liberal inclusion (2007, 132). Brennan (2004), on the other hand, distinguishes affects from feelings more explicitly. For Brennan, feelings are “sensations that have found the right match in words” (5), whereas affects are physiological. Thus, we might think of moods and sentiments as affective constellations, as these are bodily emergences that have not yet entered into language or the symbolic order. Like Ahmed, Brennan understands affect as a relational function of being within the world, a kind of evaluative orientation towards objects (5).

The second way affect is generally understood is as a concept of emergence and intensity. For Brian Massumi (1987), affect or “*l’affect* (Spinoza’s *affectus*) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body’s capacity to act. *L’affection* (Spinoza’s *affectio*) is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body” (xvi). In Massumi’s account of affect, the relationship between encounters and interactions between bodies is structured through the emergence and circulation of bodily intensities, where sensations structure our movement through the world. Here, affects are functions of the body situated in a social world and in proximity to other bodies.

Although work on affect in the first sense—where affect is more clearly connected to emotion and feeling—is significant for thinking about the circulation of subjectivities and the production of objects and subjects, my interest in transformative processes makes the second approach to affect more interesting for my argument here. In its emergent quality, affect facilitates our ability to imagine life beyond dualism. Building on Deleuze and Guattari, Massumi (1987) suggests that life does not center on the binary opposition of mind and body, but through resonating levels (e.g., skin, cognition, happiness, activity, passivity), where “affect is their point of emergence,” the moment where the experience of intensities comes into con-

sciousness (33). In Massumi’s account of affect, it is *intensity*, rather than emotion, that reveals the mechanisms at play in our circulation through the world. Although emotion is itself a manifestation of intensities, “it is intensity owned and recognized,” whereas “affect is unqualified. As such, it is not ownable or recognizable” (28). Affect is at the foundation of experiencing life and emotion is how we make sense of the intensities we recognize in the experience of life—the intensities we give language to. Thus, in Massumi’s account, emotion remains stuck to meaning structured by the symbolic order, whereas affect encounters the symbolic order, but is free from its structuring influence to name, define, and qualify.

Social movements are sites where we can trace the circulation of affects in encounter and transformation. For example, the Toronto-based queer Palestine-solidarity group, Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA), reveals a rich site where affective intensities emerged in the negotiation of a queer public at Pride. In the controversy over QuAIA’s inclusion in the Toronto Pride parade and the use of the term *Israeli apartheid*, affects circulate and build through the encounters. Intensities emerged across the externalization of sensations (the panicked responses from supporters of Israel over the term *Israeli apartheid* or the outraged response emerging from the queer community at the attempts to censor the term *Israeli apartheid*), the internalization of these intensities through the circulation of affects in space and across bodies (the rise of collective responses; the feeling of heightened investment in contesting the terrain of the public), and the transformative outcomes of such encounters (disturbances and unsettlement in the Pride parade; new modes of attachment, belonging, identification in queer communities).

Affect provides an interesting starting point for thinking about social movements and transformation precisely because it conceptualizes subjectivity and belonging through the points of encounter. Moments of controversy, such as the attempt to ban *Israeli apartheid* in Toronto, are important sites to examine not simply because they mark the sign of change, but because they reveal the resonances of everyday registers of contestation in between repression and liberation. As Brennan (2004), Sedgwick (2003), and Massumi (1987) suggest in their works, affect attends to those moments of encounter, intensity, and transmission, which shape how

we experience ourselves through the world. In highlighting these moments of encounter, theories of affect draw our attention to the spaces of possibility—where change occurs, where we react, and where we begin to respond by producing new ways of being. Movement across the controversy over the term *apartheid* demonstrates how practices of discursive normalization enable new modes of daily life. The result of these conflicts in Toronto was not social fragmentation or censorship (as we might imagine would be the outcome of an attempt to ban the term), but the transformation of discursive public space where debate over the terms of Israeli state practices and conditions of apartheid became part of the quotidian narratives of public discourse, particularly around the annual Pride parade.

Affect offers an account of how we might begin to think through our encounters in the social and political as a relationship of resonance, rather than as a relationship of reaction-effect/polarity-opposition (Sedgwick 2003, 13). In doing so, thinking about affect invites us to attend to the individual beyond neoliberal models of individualism, by thinking about how we are each moved by our affective encounters with the world. Not only can we materially and psychically not live without others, but our very entry into and movement through the social world is structured through our encounters shaped by affective relations. Our violences, our resistances are always already implicit in the struggles of circulating through the materiality of affective living. Kristeva (2000) outlines this process when she argues that,

to abolish the feeling of exclusion, to be included at all costs, are the slogans and claims not only of religions but also of totalitarianisms and fundamentalisms. For this, the purifier wants to confront an authority (value or law), to revolt against it while also being included in it. The purifier is a complex subject: he [*sic*] recognizes authority, value, law, but he claims their power must be broadened, rebelling against a restricted power in order to include a greater number of the purified...Revolt against exclusion is resolved in the renewal of exclusion at the lower echelons of the social edifice. (23)

Kristeva's argument on the cyclical nature of revolt returns us to my central concern over the possibilities of transformation and the potential of social movement-building. Despite the risks of violent renewals,

of neoliberal co-options, of seductions into empire, we consistently return to the need for transformation. To attend to the complex mechanisms that structure our relations of belonging *and* exclusion/expulsion in a neoliberal moment requires a framework, such as affect, to think through how we are both seduced into hegemonic systems and resist those very systems. For Jasbir Puar and Ann Pellegrini (2009), "concepts like affect, emotion, and feelings aid in comprehending subject-formation and political oppositionality for an age when neoliberal capital has reduced possibilities for collective political praxis" (37). It is important here to flag that, although I am proposing that affect is useful for considering transformation, affects are neither always-ethical nor always-moral. As Clare Hemmings (2005) points out, affects are mobilized for both "good" and "bad" purposes, since there are "affective responses that strengthen rather than challenge a dominant social order" (551).

Far from being a problem for affect's deployment in theorizing transformational politics, I want to propose that it is precisely the unaffiliated status of affect (the potential for both "good" and "bad"), simultaneous to its role in the unconscious drives of daily life, that makes it so compelling for thinking outside of dualisms. Because affect obliges us to suspend our investments in properly grasping the good or bad, the turn to affect is a turn to process, rather than product. Affects are not necessarily attached to morality, although they can give weight to morality. As such, they cannot speak in isolation to the production of good or bad subjectivities; rather, they speak to how subjectivities are formed, how things become embedded with meaning, what we produce, how we move and circulate through the world via our affective processes and encounters. Thus, affect cannot free us of from subjugation, but it can help us attend to what happens in the process of subjugation, what is produced, and how we move through those experiences and encounters. As Kathleen Stewart (2007) puts it, the significance of affects

lies in the intensities they build and in what thoughts and feelings they make possible. The question they beg is not what they might mean in an order of representations, or whether they are good or bad in an overarching scheme of things, but where they might go and what potential modes of knowing, relating, and attending to things are

already somehow present in them in a state of potentiality and resonance. (3)

Affect also offers us a language for thinking about how injustices are perpetrated and circulated, that do not simply dismiss these moments as “bad” or “evil,” but instead attends to how these kinds of intensities also lead to the production of privileged and hegemonic subjectivities. Thus, affect studies offers an account of human subjectivity, human belonging, and the construction of our social world that does not predict or quantify our behaviours, but instead offers a frame for understanding them beyond the tropes that reduce us to binary modes of good/bad, but still holds us accountable to our production of pain and injury and respects our capacity for love and acceptance. Indeed, activism is a project emerging from a refusal of injured life and as such, its affective function is to *move* others in the circulation of new modes of belonging, new intimacies. However, this does not make activism or social movements free from reproducing pain and injury; thus affect’s registers offer us a way to account for the simultaneous movements and transformations of activism that do both good and bad, that make life more bearable and simultaneously reenact trauma.

In the case of the queer Palestine movement, a textured reading of activism does not tell us that the *Queer Visions* declaration’s focus on pinkwashing at the World Social Forum was either good or bad. Rather, it asks us to consider how this strategy offers a point of encounter, a site of circulation of new resonances and new affinities that invites transformational possibilities. Instead of posing questions about the morality of gestures in social movements, an affect-driven orientation to thinking about transformative politics poses a new set of questions: Is this political tactic transformative? Has it been or will it be transformative in the past, present, and/or future? What new conditions are produced through the encounters with a queer intervention in the Palestine movement and the conditions that perpetuate subjugation? Do queer interventions ever stop being transformative and start becoming normative? These questions do not remove us from a world structured through binaries; however, they allow us to continue articulating injustice through terms like “good” and “bad” alongside a suspension of the need to reconcile those dualisms. Invoking a textured approach to social movements through affect theory involves attending to the

middle (Sedgwick’s middle range or Deleuze and Guattari’s plateau), prioritizing encounter and focusing on resonance and texture, rather than effect or conclusion.

Conclusion

How do the approaches to transformation that affect theory proposes translate pragmatically for social movements and for the queer Palestine movement more specifically? Affect shifts our focus on social movements from the goals and victories of activism through the language of liberation, to the everyday shifts and movements of transformative practices. Affect theory offers us a tool for re-reading disruptions, unsettlements, dissonance, new affinities, encounters, and movements as productive for the transformative projects of social movements. Thus, we might re-imagine the victories of social movements as those points of unsettling disruption in the status quo, rather than the achievement of some form of liberation. Shifting focus to transformative moments, rather than revolution, changes not only the scale of assessing social movements, but also opens new possibilities for movement building. What would it look like to cultivate our social movements by focusing on those encounters, resonances, dissonances, and twists of transformative potential instead of those victories, achievements, liberations, and utopias? Reading each resonance of affective encounter through its transformative possibility can shift the goals of the queer Palestine movement from envisioning its project as solely a liberation project, to a consideration of the pragmatics of change in the transforming conditions of injustice. It is this register that I propose is emblematic of the texture of activism and a significant direction for working on social movements.

Endnotes

¹ This approach draws on the methodology of the margins proposed by feminist intersectionality (Crenshaw 1992, hooks 2000), but diverges significantly in its focus on affect theory. Further, as an insider researcher, my methodology combines discursive reading and analysis of this social movement with my internal participation in the movement.

² Palestinian Queers for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions.

³ Early groups organizing around queer Palestine-solidarity include QUIT (Queers Undermining Israeli Terrorism) and Black Laundry, which both formed in 2001.

⁴ Jenny Burman’s (2010) work on transnational yearning has in-

formed this reading of transnational social movements. She argues that, “yearning is manifest when people express critical desires for justice and change, and try to make the conditions of their involvement in a globalized socioeconomic setting more equitable” (8).

⁵ Feminist and anarcho-political frameworks of coalition and affinity politics similarly build collective projects around analytic, rather than identity-based frameworks. See Chela Sandoval (2000) on oppositional consciousness, Chandra Mohanty (2003, 2013) on feminist solidarity and coalition, and Richard Day (2001) on ethico-political affinity politics.

⁶ Pinkwashing is not exceptional in Israeli state practices; rather, it functions as part of an array of techniques used by the Israeli state as a mechanism of international coercion and expansion of its colonial project. alQaws (2014), the Palestinian organization for sexual and gender diversity in Palestinian society, has argued that we cannot separate the blackmailing of queer Palestinians by the Israeli state from other coercive practices, such as blackmailing Palestinians seeking medical treatment.

⁷ Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call their approach “nomad thought”: a way of approaching the world that artists, cultural producers, philosophers, and other thinkers might engage in by following the tangents produced rhizomatically in social, historical, and political encounters.

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