Solidarity at Risk:
The Politics of Attachment in Transnational Queer Palestine
Solidarity and Anti-Pinkwashing Activism

by

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Department of Social Justice Education
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Abstract

Solidarity is at risk. The provocation that frames the title of this project aims to intervene in the theorization of solidarity and the practices of transnational solidarity activism in the 21st century. As a scholar embedded in the field, I take up the question of solidarity at risk to examine the practices of the transnational queer Palestine solidarity and anti-pinkwashing movement (the queer Palestine movement for short). In an era structured by the ideologies of neoliberalism, where free market globalization, privatization and individualism are reshaping the public sphere, the terms and practices of solidarity are shifting. Yet, theories of solidarity have remained embedded in older political frameworks, rooted in early social movement practices in the Marxist tradition or liberal democratic models of civic engagement. In a world changed by neoliberalism, we need new interpretive frameworks for analyzing and practicing solidarity today, not least because contemporary social movements require new ways of envisioning activist solidarity.
Neoliberalism has also changed the geopolitical landscape of human rights. In what some queer theory scholars have called homonational times, we find the political stakes of queer solidarities embedded in the changing discourses of sexual rights. Looking at examples of solidarity at risk in the queer Palestine movement, this project maps the political stakes of homonationalism and neoliberalism in social movement practices. Examining cases of solidarity at risk in the queer Palestine movement, this project moves through various theories of solidarity: from transnational feminism, to political theory and philosophy, to queer and affect theories of social and political transformation. Across all these fields, I consider what binds us in solidarity, how our political attachments are important threads in theorizing solidarity, and how we might rethink our models of solidarity to sustain our political imaginings in neoliberal and homonational times.
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Preface

*the space that is most like home, which is most comfortable and familiar, is not the space of inhabitation ... but the very space in which one is almost, but not quite, at home*

— Sara Ahmed

Growing up in a family where the politics of the Middle East were an absent presence in our daily lives, it seems inevitable that the focus of my intellectual and political work would turn to the region that is both elusive and pivotal in my own narratives of identity and belonging. Part Arab and part Jewish, I was keenly aware that the politics of the region were a contested terrain; however, my family’s intentional refusal to talk about the politics of Israel, Palestine and Lebanon produced a tenuous model for me to situate myself in the world. Identity evaded me throughout my childhood. I could never fully grasp my own identity, much less the identities of those around me. As a child, I was told that my anger could be attributed to my “hot Arab blood;” as an adolescent, I helped raise money to send diasporic Jewish youth on birthright trips to Israel; and as a young adult, I struggled to reconcile the implied incompatibility of my Jewish and Arab ancestries. These are all moments that marked the dissonance between my early failures at belonging and my inheritance of irreconcilable identifications.

By the time I began university, I had learned how to make identity-claims and began asserting my belonging in a new community – that of activism. This new affiliation was largely predicated on my successful articulation of a stable set of political identifications; I pronounced that I was a feminist, a woman of colour, and later a queer person of colour. I found temporary refuge in the form of anti-oppression organizing, where pronouncing my identity appeared to produce instant attachments and the promise of alliance, community and friendship. Eventually, however, political identity failed me; where it had once offered a promise of solidarity both in activism and community, these gestures of attachment were constantly under threat of being revoked with the slip or accusation of “bad politics.” As easily as it produces alliances, identity can also be a weapon of communal expulsion. I grew increasingly ambivalent about the centering of identity politics in activism and social movements as I witnessed friends and comrades expelled from communities. Identity, and the promise of belonging, stopped being enough to sustain my political imagining.
This project is conceived out of the concomitant impossibility of escaping identity and the limits of identity in changing our social and political conditions. It is a project that charts my attempt to reconcile the challenge of solidarity and its failures in the making of activist attachments in social movements. What does it mean to be an activist in a world that has become on the one hand, pessimistic about the possibility of change, and on the other hand frequently gestures to the need for change without offering much by way of the tangible? In the wake of popular uprisings in the Middle East (the Arab Spring), mass mobilizations in opposition to globalization and capitalism (the Occupy movement, G20, World Summit, etc.), and emerging social movements in North America (Idle No More, Black Lives Matter), the contemporary moment is ripe with commentary on the nature of activism and social and political change. I do not intend to offer much in response to these larger revolutionary moments, nor do I desire to predict or explain the components that make up revolution. Instead, I want to attend to the attachments and detachments of activism amidst a historical moment that is consumed with imagining the goal of transformation to be revolutionary, global, and profoundly ideological. This approach turns to the tensions, ambivalences, and desires that underlie contemporary solidarities. We could call this approach many things: a theory of transformation, a philosophy of activism, or an ethics for change. My current preference, however, is to think of this project through the texture of solidarity and activism as a politics of attachment.
Introduction

Transnational Queer Solidarities and the Politics of Attachment

*Attachment is crucial to survival ... when attachment takes place, it does so in relation to ... conditions that may well be violent, impoverishing, and inadequate*

— Judith Butler

I became active in the Palestine solidarity movement\(^1\) in 2006, in the wake of the Lebanon War, World Pride Jerusalem, and the first Out Games in Montreal. A summer saturated with the celebration of sexual rights and against the backdrop of Israel’s war on Lebanon marked a pivotal moment in my own political imaginings. No longer able to suppress the dissonance between my diasporic inheritance of the Middle East conflict in my Jewish and Lebanese familial attachments, the war sparked my involvement in queer and transnational anti-war and anti-occupation solidarity activism. This dissertation weds my participation in the growing movement of transnational queer Palestine solidarity activism to my research on theories of solidarity, social movements, and queer politics. In the chapters that follow, I examine how practices of solidarity are both deeply meaningful for the project of social and political transformation and at risk of unraveling the transformative potential of social movements.

My thesis – that solidarity is at risk\(^2\) – combines my analysis of theories of solidarity with a critical examination of transnational solidarity in the queer Palestine movement, which I have

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1 I refer to the social movement in support of the Palestinian struggle for liberation as the *Palestine solidarity movement*. Note, however, that there is a US campus-based organization also called the *Palestine Solidarity Movement*, which organized a series of conferences in the early 2000s.

2 I employ risk in its colloquial use, rather than as a reference to the field of risk studies. My intention is to think provocatively about both our solidarities as at risk (i.e. how solidarity efforts might be undermined by neoliberalism and homonationalism) and the risk of doing solidarity work (i.e. that we might perhaps fail at our attempts at transformation). Risk studies, a field that developed in the 1980s and 90s, is concerned with threat and security in the period of late modernity – particularly in the threat of environmental collapse, terrorism, epidemic, etc. According to this field, increasing social insecurities that are a consequence of human activity have resulted in a shift towards *risk societies*, which reorient society towards security, sustainability and risk management. In part, my use of risk shares a relationship to the temporality of neoliberalism as a feature of late modernity; however my focus on the reflexive practices of solidarity diverges significantly from risk studies’ interest in large-scale threats to human survival.
participated in since 2006. Reflecting on the challenges of working under the banner of solidarity activism, my contention is that despite our best intentions to overcome the problems of globalization, austerity and securitization through solidarity, we cannot escape the impact of neoliberalism. As such, solidarity needs to be re-examined for the survivability of social movements in the 21st century. I believe that the queer Palestine movement serves not only as an important site for thinking about new solidarities and directions in social movement practices, but also forewarns us of the coming challenges to our political projects. If we hope to sustain the possibility that solidarity engenders in us – the potential to connect across differences in the interest of transformation – then we need a political vernacular that can speak to the governing ideologies of the present.

I begin this introduction by contextualizing the queer Palestine movement, outlining the political stakes of sexuality in regional conflict across Palestine, Israel and Lebanon, and introducing the stakes of political attachment that organize transnational solidarities. Next, I outline the research and epistemological methods that guide this dissertation and my thesis that solidarity is at risk, followed by an auto-ethnographic exploration of the stakes of identity and attachment in the project of solidarity. I conclude by outlining the central assertion of this project: that solidarity is at risk in the neoliberal and homonalitan era, and our attentiveness to this risk will shape our capacities for solidarity in the 21st century.

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3 I have worked primarily as an organizing member of the Toronto-based group, Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA), and an international network of activists that came out of the World Social Forum: Free Palestine in 2012. My analytic work on solidarity and my activist work within the queer Palestine movement has unequivocally informed both this research and my activist practices.

4 Håkan Thörn refers to social movements as a “form of collective action that ultimately aims at transforming a social order. Further, a social movement is a process involving as its central elements the articulation of social conflicts and collective identities, of ‘us’ and ‘others’” (2009, 421). My work proposes that that the effects of neoliberalism and its connected relationship to homonationalism threaten the ability of social movements to maintain coherence in a shifting economy of individualization, which translate those collective identities into the exceptionalism of the individual.
A Gay Oasis in the Middle East & the Regional Politics of Queer Attachment

In recent years, the profile of the queer Palestine solidarity movement has grown through the proliferation of groups internationally and public debate about sexual rights, Palestinian human rights and the Israeli state. Since 2011, American scholars and public intellectuals such as Jasbir Puar (2011), Sarah Schulman (2011, 2012), and Judith Butler5 have publicly supported the organizing efforts of queer Palestinian activists and critiqued the Israeli state’s use of sexual rights discourses in its domestic and foreign policies. The interventions from these public intellectuals, combined with a flourishing of activism internationally between 2001 and 2013,6 signals the emergence of a transnational queer solidarity movement alongside the larger Palestine solidarity movement.

The politics surrounding Palestine/Israel7 are hotly debated, and although my research investigates the discourses surrounding some of this conflict, I will not attempt to summarize or assess the complex and extensively researched history and political analysis of Palestine and Israel here. However, there is one question that pervades debates about queer solidarity activism with Palestine that I want to consider: why single out Israel for queer interventions, if Israel is the only country in the Middle East that has legislated gay rights? This question may seem like a non sequitur – why single out any country for its violations of human rights if some rights are protected? Yet the question of queer intervention and gay rights turns out to be an important one. Why do we find such a strong queer movement in opposition to the Israeli state’s military practices and governance and relatively few queer movements in opposition to the practices of other nation states? Indeed, it may seem more intuitive that queer interventions should be aimed


7 I have elected to use the unconventional inversion of Israel/Palestine for two reasons. First, the focus of this research is on the Palestine movement, as such, it references primarily the geopolitical perspectives affecting discourses surrounding the question of Palestine. Second, I am interested in what the gesture of naming performs in our interpretation of the geopolitical landscape of transnational solidarity. How might inverting the order of nations perform a psychic inversion in our thinking in the politics of the region? I do not aim to answer this question here, however I employ the inversion technique experimentally as an exercise in political re-imaginings.
at nation states that violate gay rights, and celebrate those states that protect gay rights. So, why single out Israel?

Part of the answer lies in the inversion of the question: why is Israel exceptional for its gay rights? With the inception of the Brand Israel campaign in 2005, the Israeli state began using discourses of gay rights and liberal democracy to generate international support. Transforming Israel’s public image from war, militarism and violence to a modern cosmopolitan center featuring scientific and technological advancements and thriving arts and culture, Brand Israel’s discursive project aimed to align the nation state with the consumer values of Western neoliberalism that center on individual freedom rooted in free market consumption. Part of this public relations project also focused on highlighting Israel’s cosmopolitan and cultural hub, Tel Aviv. Promoting the thriving gay social scene in Tel Aviv and celebrating legislated gay rights – such as military inclusion, recognition of foreign same-sex unions, and anti-discrimination protections – Israel’s international public image positioned the nation state as exceptional within the Middle East because of gay rights. The branding of Israel as a “gay oasis” was therefore achieved through a hierarchization of rights, which placed Palestinian human rights well below sexual rights. Now commonly referred to as the practice of pinkwashing, Israel’s use of gay rights discourses in order to divert attention away from the state’s violation of human rights has become a key focus of intervention in the queer solidarity movement.

The contradiction of Israel’s celebration of gay rights against the backdrop of the state’s military occupation of Palestine and numerous military incursions explains in part why queer activists have singled out Israel for its violation of human rights. In her critique of US sexual exceptionalism, Jasbir Puar (2007) argues, “the temporality of exception is one that seeks to conceal itself” (9). The transcendence of the nation state through its exceptionalism is always

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8 I return to this topic in Chapter 2, where I examine sexual rights discourses under neoliberalism more extensively.

9 Brand Israel is an international public relations campaign funded by the Israeli Foreign Ministry, the Prime Minister’s Office and the Finance Ministry aimed at re-branding Israel’s image as modern and bolstering the state’s reputation internationally (Schulman, 2011).


11 Most notable are the two most recent Gaza wars, including 2008/9, 2012 and 2014.
accompanied by a disavowal of its own violence. Despite the normativizing project of sexual nationalism that is bedfellows with neoliberal discourses of gay rights and inclusion, which on the surface appear to invite LGBT subjects into the nation state, a significant stream of queer activism remains suspicious of these practices.\textsuperscript{12} As such, the sexual exceptionalism of the nation state is already untenable for queer activists who see the nation state as the perpetrator of violence.\textsuperscript{13}

Figure 1: “Nothing Comes Clean With Pinkwashing,” sticker (Courtesy of QuAIA Toronto)

For activists in the transnational queer Palestine solidarity and anti-pinkwashing movement\textsuperscript{14} (which I will refer to as the queer Palestine movement or queer Palestine solidarity for the sake of brevity), mobilization against Israeli state practices is largely a response to the state’s use of sexuality in the service of upholding state violence in the form of military occupation, the expansion of illegal settlements, the erection of the separation wall, checkpoints, 

\textsuperscript{12} See Dean Spade (2011, 2013) on critical queer politics and the challenge of the nation state and Karma Chavez’s (2013) work on queer migration politics.

\textsuperscript{13} For Puar (2007), the transgressive quality of queer is “precisely the term by which queerness narrates its own sexual exceptionalism” (22). I argue in favour of this critique of queerness in Chapter 1, however, I also want to demonstrate how the sexual exceptionalism of the nation state flags it for activist critique.

\textsuperscript{14} Figure 1 shows a sticker used in an anti-pinkwashing campaign created by Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA) Toronto in 2012.
military raids of peoples homes, and other daily practices of state violence enacted under the discourse of Israeli state security. Thus, rather than fighting for or against gay rights, queer Palestine solidarity activists focus their critique on the conditions of state violence and the discursive practices used to justify Israeli state practices.

The image of Israel as the only safe place for gays in the Middle East relies on the universalization and homogenization of gay rights discourses, which is accomplished through a rhetorical device whereby gay rights are used to justify militarism and state security because the nation state is exceptional. However, the exceptionalism of the Israeli state’s celebration of gay rights comes at a cost: if the nation state is gay-friendly, then the problem of homophobia is only individual, not institutional or systemic. In the 2009 murder of two Israeli youth at the Bar Noar LGBT youth center in Tel Aviv, Israeli government officials were quick to publicly denounce the murders as exceptional acts, not representative of Israeli society (Hochberg 2010, 494). Rumors circulated quickly that the murders must have been perpetrated by an Arab, but when the primary suspect turned out to be a Jewish Israeli citizen, public opinion quickly turned to individualized explanations: the murder was narrated as a story of personal revenge rather than systemic homophobia (Gross 2014).

The sexual exceptionalism of the Israeli state also elides the diverse forms of organizing and advocacy across the region around sexuality, gender and bodily rights. In Palestine, queer organizations such as ASWAT (2002) and alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society (2006) have worked on advocacy, support, empowerment and activism of LGBTQI16 Palestinians for over 10 years. In Lebanon, the first LGBT advocacy organization, Helem, was founded in 2004, followed by Meem in 2006. Israel’s image as a gay oasis begins to look more like a mirage if we examine the breadth of sexuality- and gender-based organizing in the region beyond Tel Aviv. Thus, the exceptionalism of the gay oasis metaphor functions as a trick in optics that extols the nation state and obscures the work of activists across the region.

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15 Joseph Massad (2007) calls the universalization of gay rights a part of the imperializing project of the West, which he names as the Gay International.

16 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex – a combination of the acronyms used on ASWAT’s and alQaws’ websites.
The circulation of discourses of national and sexual exceptionalism are a product of the neoliberal era, where the simultaneous conditions of individualized rights, consumer-citizenship and national branding radically alter the relationship between the nation state, human rights and citizenship. A new figure – the sexual citizen\textsuperscript{17} – emerges in Western discourses in the neoliberal era; this figure is introduced in contradistinction to the familiar tropes of orientalist depictions of Middle East sexualities, which are at once repressed and perverse.\textsuperscript{18} As individual rights and sexual exceptionalism come to shape the discursive landscape of the neoliberal and Western nation state, sexual intelligibility becomes a marker of modernity. Thus, under 21\textsuperscript{st} century neoliberalism, sexual identity has become a central feature of the relationship between the nation state and citizenship. Here, we find the emergence of sexual rights discourses in the Middle East, which Joseph Massad (2007) critiques as a product of Western imperialism. For Massad, international development efforts around sexual rights, what he calls the Gay International, impose sexual identities “where they do not exist, and represses same-sex desires and practices” (162). Massad argues that the history of Arab same-sex desire has been replaced by Western sexual epistemologies (40).\textsuperscript{19} However, his dismissal of emergent sexual identities misses key ways that new sexualities, and queer political subjectivities in particular, offer important interventions into modern projects of state building.

Caught between the appropriation of sexualities to serve the interests of the neoliberal nation state and Massad’s critique of sexual identity as inauthentic, Middle East sexualities become tools of Western imperialism. However, both these critiques obscure and erase the intelligibility of sexual politics in the region. While I agree that sexualities are mobilized in the interests of Western imperialism and neoliberalism, we also find resistant sexualities, which have produced new sites of political contestation, particularly through the emergence of queer

\textsuperscript{17} I will return in more detail to the figure of the sexual citizen in Chapter 2.

\textsuperscript{18} In Edward Said’s (1978) formulation of orientalism, Western colonial academic, cultural and ontological constructions of the Orient were central to European domination of the Middle East.

\textsuperscript{19} Massad is primarily concerned with the colonial restructuring of taxonomies of gender and sexuality into the binary model of sex/gender systems globally and the imposition of the hetero-homo binary on the Middle East. See Dina Georgis’ (2013b, 119) critique of Massad, where she argues that Massad’s model unnecessarily favours an “unnamed” model of Arab sexuality.
activism. Contemporary queer-identified and politicized activists working in Lebanon and Palestine, through organizations such as ASWAT, alQaws, Helem and Meem, cannot be dismissed because the Western model of sexual exceptionalism weighs on discourses of sexuality; rather, these groups and activists emerge in tension within a political landscape where sexual exceptionalism has come to define the modern nation state. More than simply mirroring Western models of sexual identity, these groups critique imperializing discourses around sexuality that emerge under neoliberal globalization, which universalizes sexual rights discourses. Dina Georgis (2013b) calls this kind of a resistance a “better story for left postcolonial cultures” (21), and I propose that it is precisely because the site of queer intervention is caught between two poles of power, cultural authenticity on the one hand and neoliberal instrumentalization on the other, that we must look to these queer practices for new narratives, approaches and directions for contemporary resistance.

Georgis asks, “how do we unlearn our worn-out responses and how can stories provide the conditions for teaching us new insights?” (25). This question is all the more pressing in a political present that is at once stressed by the urgency of political action under accelerated conditions of state violence in 21st century civilizational wars between the West and Middle East, and a context where sexuality becomes an instrument of war in the battle of public relations that activists have called pinkwashing. Against this backdrop, what role do queer identities and politics play in reshaping the narratives of the nation state and state violence? Research has only recently begun to be published on queer identities and activism in Lebanon and Palestine (Habib 2007; Ritchie 2010; Makarem 2011; Amer 2012; Georgis 2013a; Naber and Zaatari 2014;

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20 Massad has dismissed Arab gay politics as assimilationist. In 2009, Massad and Helem’s founding member, Ghassan Makarem, debated the terms of Massad’s critique and organizations such as Helem (a Lebanese LGBT organization) in the web magazine Reset DOC: Dialogues on Civilizations. In Massad’s December 1st post, he argues that gay rights groups in the Middle East, such as Helem, are made up of “a tiny minority of individuals who want to assimilate into the Western gay movement.” My contention is that this critique may capture part of the problem of Western imperialism, however it dismisses the forms of queer activism in the region that are pointedly anti-imperialist.


This early research points to the tension between anthropological research on Arab sexualities and the politicized identities of queer politics in the region.

In April 2011 I traveled to Beirut, Lebanon to conduct fieldwork on queer Palestine solidarity activism. My goal was to examine the different political stakes of movement building across Toronto and Beirut, and to outline how international versus regional solidarities might raise different questions for social movement development in the Palestine solidarity movement. Structured through frames of queer resistance and critiques of Israeli state practices of sexual exceptionalism, the queer politics of activists based in Lebanon and Palestine demonstrates the conditions of contemporary political attachments, which center on political contestation rather than shared identity. Queer organizing in the region thus serves not only to create sites for resistance, but is a product of new political attachments that emerge under the urgency of shifting political stakes in the governing ideologies of new economies of sexuality, such as the sexual exceptionalism of the neoliberal nation state. Thus, queer politics and solidarities in Lebanon and Palestine must be located regionally, not simply as taxonomies of Western sexualities, but as distinct political emergences that intervene in the geopolitical conditions of state violence and nationalism.

Within Lebanon, the geopolitics of regional conflicts – particularly following the Lebanese Civil War and the multiple Israeli state invasions and wars – is a backdrop for the shifting relationship between sexual identities and queer politics that foregrounds solidarities

21 There is little current research on the cross-border regional and international networks and organizing going on between activists in Lebanon and other Muslim and Arab countries in the MENA. I am familiar with some of this work anecdotally, such as the Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies, of which three Lebanese organizations are listed as member organizations, and Mantiqitna, a regional network and conference for queer activists and organizations.


22 My research has combines discourse analysis of materials produced and circulated transnationally online by the diverse actors in the queer Palestine solidarity movement. Throughout this dissertation, I will reference videos, photos, images, posters, slogans, blog posts, press releases, news reports, journalism, and other audio and visual material produced and circulated digitally online that make up the transnational discursive landscape of queer Palestine solidarity activism.

with Palestine.\textsuperscript{24} Within Lebanese society, mass discrimination against Palestinians shapes daily life; yet the presence of Palestine solidarity organizing within the country makes Lebanon a unique site for thinking about queer solidarity in the Palestine movement, precisely because of its geopolitical relationship to Palestine/Israel and the complex history of queer organizing in the region at the turn of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century.\textsuperscript{25}

When I began my fieldwork in 2011, I met with activists in Beirut and discussed the politics of Palestine solidarity work and queer organizing.\textsuperscript{26} My intention had been to conduct a comparative ethnographic inquiry into queer Palestine solidarity activism in Beirut versus Toronto using participant observation. At first I was interested in documenting the internal conditions of queer Palestine solidarity work in Lebanon, to find a mirror of Canadian forms of queer solidarity to contextualize my desire for a coherent model of transnational solidarity. However, my time spent with queer solidarity activists in Beirut revealed that my attachments to a recognizable model of queer solidarity relied on my own desire to recognize and be recognized. This is not to say that I was not successful at recognizing or being recognized – indeed I met with and developed relationships with like-minded collaborators and interlocutors – however I came to understand these relationships through a tension in my yearnings for transnational attachments. To continue my fieldwork, I needed to simultaneously turn to and abandon my attachments. Instead of conducting ethnographic work, my fieldwork became a space for self-reflection on transnational solidarity. I had adopted a reflexive approach; instead of conducting an ethnography of solidarity activism, I reflected on the geopolitical location of Lebanon as a site for solidarity in relation to my own attachments to transnational solidarity activism. I abandoned my plans to look comparatively at solidarity activists, and instead shifted my focus onto the relationship of attachments in transnational solidarity. In this reflexive work, Lebanon became

\textsuperscript{24} Although Lebanon houses one of the largest Palestinian refugee populations, estimated at 300 000 and rising with approximately 60 000 Palestinian refugees from Syria since the start of the 2011 uprising, Lebanon holds a striking record of human rights abuses against its Palestinian refugee population, including the barring of land ownership, employment and national documentation to refugees and their descendants born in Lebanon (Human Rights Watch 2014).

\textsuperscript{25} See Ghassan Makarem (2011) for a history of Helem, the first Beirut-based LGBT organization, and the rise of sexual rights organizing in the region in the early 21\textsuperscript{st} century.

\textsuperscript{26} I met with a range of activists in Lebanon, both queer-identified and non-queer, some working on Palestine solidarity activism actively and others not.
not only the site of my diasporic attachments, but also a key site for understanding how queer solidarity functions geopolitically in tension with the desire to map on a legible and recognizable queer figure for solidarity onto the region. More than simply an Orientalist or Western fantasy of sexuality in the Middle East, my time in Lebanon convinced me of the shift in the transnational conditions of sexuality, politics and solidarity – particularly as it became clear to me that queer organizing in Beirut was not simply a product of Western imperialism, but a response to the imperialization of sexuality through sexual rights discourses in the transnational sphere.

Lebanon’s political and geographic proximity to Palestine/Israel, its history of civil war, conflicts with the Israeli state, and Syrian military occupation are formative geopolitical conditions that embed internal politics in Lebanon, such as those of solidarity, in transnational orientations. We see these transnational orientations in queer activism within Lebanon, where many activist articulations of solidarity are rooted in transnational connections and frameworks for justice across sexuality, gender and bodily rights. For instance, the Nasawiya feminist collective’s work on migrant worker solidarity connects activist analysis and organizing across state, institutional, and structural violence. Thus, women, trans people, queer people, migrant workers and others subjected to repression, restriction and harm under ruling social orders in Lebanon, across the MENA and globally, are the subjects of diverse activist solidarities in cities like Beirut.

When it comes to the Palestine solidarity movement, queer activists in Palestine and solidarity activists in Lebanon challenge both the sexual exceptionalism of the Israeli state and the exceptionalism of Middle East sexualities as separate from the conditions of state violence. During my fieldwork, it became clear that we cannot examine queer Palestine solidarity activism in Lebanon without seeing the link between local struggles and transnational contexts related to

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27 The history of the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990), shaped by sectarian divisions combined with multiple military occupations and invasions frames the backdrop of contemporary Lebanese politics and society. Between the 1960s until 1982, Lebanon was the base of operations for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Between 1978 and 2006 Israel launched numerous strikes and invasions of Lebanon, including 1982 invasion of Lebanon, which drove the PLO out of Beirut. From 1976 to 2005 Lebanon was also under Syrian military occupation. Lebanon’s history of sectarian division and civil war has been extensively documented and researched.
economic migration, forced displacement, militarism, Western imperialism, US foreign military aid, and domestic sectarianism.\textsuperscript{28}

In the few short weeks that I have spent in Beirut, I’ve learned that queer political struggle is not about the liberation of gay people, but about the transformation of Lebanese civil society and public life. The problem of sectarianism, for example, is not simply a political problem governing Lebanese nationalisms, it is also the structuring mechanism that propels power and patriarchy. Activists are clear about the way patriarchy is central to the problem of homophobia in Lebanon, and thus the project of feminism is vastly more profound to queer organizing in Beirut than it is in North America today. Coalitional politics are a significant part of organizing for gender and sexual-based rights, and not simply aimed at recognition under the law, but for the alleviation of oppression based on gender and sexuality. (Excerpt from my edited field notes)

My field notes demonstrate the central thread connecting sexual and bodily rights to the impacts of neoliberal globalization circulating in Beirut activist discourses. The rise of organizations such as Helem, Meem and Nasawiya\textsuperscript{29} in Beirut from 2004 to 2010 are part of the city’s political terrain where activists advanced multi-dimensional analyses connecting local and transnational politics, which Nadine Naber and Zeina Zaatari (2014) call an intersectional and anti-imperial feminist analysis. For Naber and Zaatari, the crux of this political approach emerged in the 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon and its aftermath, which “provided a heightened moment of political activism in which activists came to articulate a feminist and LGBTQ critique that insisted that concepts and practices of gender and sexuality in Lebanon were shaped within the broader contexts of US and Israeli imperial war and the interrelated Lebanese state structures of sectarianism, classism, and racism” (92).

The year 2006 marks a pivotal moment in both regional politics across Lebanon and Palestine/Israel and transnational solidarity in queer organizing. It marks the year of Israel’s second war on Lebanon, World Pride Jerusalem, the first World Out Games in Montreal, and the intensification of public discourse around sexuality in the Middle East, particularly following the

\textsuperscript{28} See Naber and Zaatari (2014) for more on the intersectional work of Lebanese activism in the post-2006 war period (106).

\textsuperscript{29} Helem is a sexual rights advocacy organization that formed in 2004, Meem is an organization for queer women and trans people formed in 2007 and Nasawiya, the Feminist Collective formed in 2010. For more on the feminist and LGBT organizations in Lebanon, see Naber and Zaatari (2014, 93).
launch of Israel’s gay-friendly public relations stream of the Brand Israel project commonly referred to as pinkwashing. This was also the year that I came into the queer solidarity movement. The simultaneous dimensions of war, occupation, queer politics and my own diasporic attachments through my familial connections to the region embedded my transnational attachments in activist solidarity.

At the height of the 2006 Lebanon war, Rasha Moumneh from the Beirut LGBT organization, Helem, issued a video statement calling on the international community at the World Out Games International Conference on LGBT Human Rights in Montreal to boycott the 2006 Jerusalem World Pride festival. Connecting the war on Lebanon to the siege on Gaza, Moumneh outlined how the Israeli state’s practices of violence were discursively connected to the language of sexual rights and freedom mobilized in World Pride. Under the theme, “Love Without Borders,” it was not simply ironic that World Pride Jerusalem was held in one of the most heavily bordered states in the world, but illustrative of a larger shift that has occurred in the early 21st century around what Jasbir Puar (2013) calls the “historical convergence of state practices, transnational circuits of queer commodity culture and human rights paradigms” (337). While the LGBT Human Rights conference did not endorse the boycott of World Pride Jerusalem, the call for transnational solidarity in opposition to Israeli state practices marks a pivotal moment in the building of regional and transnational solidarities that makes up the focus of this project.

Although queer organizing surrounding the 2006 war in Lebanon highlights the tensions across state violence, global security and human rights discourses internal to Lebanon, the rise of queer organizing in Beirut must be contextualized transnationally and as part of a wider emergence of queer groups in the MENA region in the early 21st century. In the early 2000s, explicitly queer groups began to form, such as ASWAT Palestinian Gay Women in 2002 and

30 QuAIA Toronto’s website includes a section devoted to explaining how this public relations discourse works. Queer Against Israeli Apartheid. *Gay Israel*. http://queersagainstapartheid.org/gayisrael/ (accessed June 30, 2014)

Helem in Lebanon in 2004. This period also saw the emergence of queer solidarity groups, such as Queers Undermining Israeli Terrorism (QUIT) in San Francisco and Black Laundry in Israel in 2001. By mid-decade, the number of groups organizing had doubled, with alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society forming in 2006, Queers Against Israeli Apartheid Toronto (QuAIA) in 2008, followed by a number of other groups under the name QuAIA forming in cities across North America, most notably in New York, Seattle and Vancouver, among others. By 2010, a distinctly transnational focus in the movement began to emerge with the establishment of the Pinkwatching Israel website and the formation of Palestinian Queers for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions.

In recent years, increasing international networking across groups has occurred, such as the queer gathering at the World Social Forum: Free Palestine in 2012 under the banner of Queer Visions. Drawing on the rich material produced in the transnational networks of groups organizing across North America, Europe, and the Middle East, the chapters that follow work through how discourses of solidarity are both articulated and destabilized in the transnational queer Palestine solidarity movement. As with all group formations, social movement development has a life of its own, exceeding the individual investments, identifications and attachments of its members. However, I am interested in what attachments and identifications in social movement building reveal about the practice of solidarity, not least because my own participation in solidarity activism is so deeply embedded in my own history of attachments.

Belonging, Identity and Attachment in Transnational Solidarity

*Identifications are erotic, intellectual and emotional.*

— Diana Fuss

*Identifying with other people risks obliterating them as separate beings. We must feel the suffering of others as theirs, as not-ours, if we are to retain a sense of their alterity.*

— Adam Phillips & Barbara Taylor

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32 Examples of queer solidarity with Palestine can be found as early as the 1990s in Toronto’s Pride parade and dyke march, where activists marched with messages in support of Palestinian rights. However explicitly queer Palestine-focused groups only emerged in the early 2000s. See Appendix 2 for a timeline of queer organizations and groups.
April in Beirut is warm like summer in Montreal. The heat is not yet oppressive and the streets are filled with the contrasting smell of pollution and the fragrance of spring blossoms. It is 2011 and I am in Lebanon for the first time. I am the first person in my direct lineage to step foot in the Middle East since my great grandparents immigrated to Canada in the 1890s. Beirut is a city that seems to invite people who are lost. Over and over again, I meet people who have turned to Beirut to find refuge from their displacement. I can’t tell if anyone feels a stable belonging within the city, but all the people I meet seem more familiar than I expect them to be. It is my first trip outside of North America and combined with my deep longing to find a place of origin, I can’t help but map a romantic narrative onto the city. I am here to conduct fieldwork on the relationship of transnational queer Palestine solidarity activism across Canada and Lebanon; secretly, I hope to find attachments that will anchor me to Beirut, to find a way to belong.

Within the first few days I quickly learn that queer activism in Lebanon is a small world and queer life in the city is simultaneously vibrant and dangerous. The threat of police harassment and blackmail is present, but these are largely targeted towards those who are precariously positioned. In Lebanon, social location plays a much stronger role in shaping queer politics than sexuality. As a foreigner who will soon return to Canada, I am clumsy with my own queerness, but my Canadian passport and lack of familial obligation shields me from confronting the hard parts of queer life in the city.

— Excerpt from my edited field notes

“Secretly, I hope to find attachments that will anchor me to Beirut, to find a way to belong.” The words echo as I write this introduction and return to my field notes years after leaving Beirut. Memories long sequestered return with force, and I am reminded of my own investment in finding attachment to the site of my imagined origins in Lebanon. In Strange Encounters, Sara Ahmed (2000) argues, “home is not simply about fantasies of belonging (where do I originate from?), but that it is sentimentalized as a space of belonging (‘home is where the heart is’)” (89). For Ahmed, the provocation of home and strangeness is a defining feature of migrancy and diasporic subjectivity. My own turn to Lebanon is fraught with anxieties over the loss of attachments and the limits of my identifications with social and political identity back home in Canada. As such, my work on transnational solidarity is inextricably connected to my own history of lost attachments.

My field notes are filled with emotive entries, such as long descriptive paragraphs that animate the city of Beirut as a site of seduction. Reading through these notes, I am reminded of my yearning to find and build relationships that will root me in Lebanon, a place where any remaining relations are long lost over a century after my family first immigrated to Montreal. Diana Fuss (1995a) says, “identification is an embarrassingly ordinary process, a routine, habitual compensation for the everyday loss of our love-objects” (1). Looking back, searching
for belonging in Beirut was an exercise in the intimate and elusive character of identification. However, my desire to connect my work on Palestine solidarity activism in Canada to the regional politics of queer identifications and solidarity across Lebanon and Palestine/Israel, is not only a narrative that situates my own subjectivity in solidarity and belonging, it also reveals key ways that attachment functions in the very formation of solidarity.

Parsing out the strands of attachment and identification in solidarity is a difficult task, not only because solidarities are diverse, fragmented and ambivalent, but because they are also embedded in the personal. As a researcher, I am ambivalent about situating my own desires and impulses in my analysis of solidarity. Although feminist methodologies like auto-ethnography and insider research valorize the self-reflexive approach to locating the self in research, I also fear the risk of myopic analysis that can accompany research in transnational fields, particularly in relation to the geopolitical centering of the Global North. However, it has become clear to me that to seriously consider solidarity requires a turn to the self. For Fuss, “identification is the detour through the other that defines a self” (2); it is “a question of relation, of self to other, subject to object, inside to outside” (3). Solidarity, as a politics of political alignment, of interdependence or shared political struggle, is foundationally a practice embedded in the question of attachment through political identifications, which “form the most intimate and yet the most elusive part of our unconscious lives” (2). To turn to the self is therefore an integral way of understanding how identification functions in solidarity. Further, to not consider the self in solidarity risks obscuring the work of the subconscious at play in political attachments.

Adam Phillips and Barbara Taylor (2009) argue, “to live well, we must be able to imaginatively identify with other people, and allow them to identify with us” (97). If identification requires a form of reciprocity to achieve compensation for our lost love-objects, what happens when identifications fail to offer us the promise of attachment? Identification

33 This project is a case in point of the diverse, fragmented and ambivalent attachments in the Palestine solidarity movement, including queer factions, one-state versus two-state groups, religious-based organizing and humanitarian groups.

34 Even if those identifications are based on misrecognition, projection, fantasy, and desire.

35 Here, attachment comes in the form of belonging, family, kinship, and community.
with my Jewishness failed throughout of my childhood; as the half-Arab daughter of a Jewish father, I was unintelligible to the communities of belonging available to other members of my extended family. In family gatherings and in Jewish communities, my Arabness proved to be an irreconcilable racialization that stuck to me and foreclosed reciprocity as I identified with my Jewish ancestry.\textsuperscript{36} Meanwhile, I vehemently tried to deny my Arab identity throughout my childhood, distancing myself from the racist tropes of barbarism that permeated public discourse of Arabs during the first Gulf War. Recalling my earliest childhood memories, it was the charge of “hot Arab blood” when I expressed anger that fueled my dissociation with Arab identity.

From the betrayals of familial attachment that followed my parent’s divorce to my experiences of failure at achieving social attachments in Jewish and Arab identities and political attachments in queer and people of colour identities, my turn to solidarity was a way to seek out new forms of identification and attachment. Solidarity is another kind of imaginative identification, where its subjects seek out meaningful attachment through identifications of another kind: identifications through shared struggle, common political vision, shared oppositions or failures, and even transcendence of identities. Nevertheless, the nature of identification is never stable – we can never fully identify because we can never fully know the other – and so even solidarity is a risky site of attachment. In the case of the queer Palestine movement, the instability of attachment raises important questions about the difference between attachments born out of shared identity and attachments emergent in political orientation or critique.

In \textit{States of Injury}, Wendy Brown (1995) argues that political attachments and political identities are embedded in wounded attachments. “In its emergence as a protest against marginalization or subordination, politicized identity thus becomes attached to its own exclusion both because it is premised on this exclusion for its very existence as identity and because the formation of identity at the site of exclusion” (73). In Brown’s work, when we become attached to our injured identities as a basis for political identification, we “inadvertently redraw the very configurations and effects of power that [we] … seek to vanquish” (ix). However, despite the

\textsuperscript{36} My experience echoes Ella Shohat’s (1992) work on dislocated identities and her experiences of illegibility as an Iraqi Jew in the United States.
risk of unraveling the possibility of transformational attachments by replicating hegemonic power configurations, political identification is both necessary and deeply meaningful for political attachments, such as solidarity.

Identification and attachment, whether wounded or otherwise, is necessary for our capacities to envision a radical transformation of our symbolic orders. For Brown, the critique of political identity aims to uncouple feminism from an attachment to identity politics, and indeed I am sympathetic to this critique, as identity-attachments have consistently failed me. Yet identification is necessary for all survival, especially the survival of abject subjects. To find new ways of belonging and new forms of identification is essential for us to live, but this does not mean that we must attach to identity for our identifications to work. Solidarity is a form of identification rooted in political attachments. Identification in solidarity functions as a different mode of attachment, separate from the governing norms of our symbolic order but nonetheless a site of belonging. We must therefore think of solidarity as a relationship of attachment that should resist the conflation of the political with identity.

In *Identities and Freedom*, Allison Weir (2013) attempts to recuperate identity from the problem of wounded attachments. For Weir, attachments to regimes of power can be separated by distinguishing the category of identity from the practice of *identification with* (3). She argues, “identities can be understood as complex webs of interaction among diverse relations of power and diverse relations of meaning, love, and solidarity” (3). Instead of reinforcing stable identities, however, she proposes that the practice of identification should be interpreted as a form of *freedom in connection*, by locating freedom in *social* freedom, which is shaped by the relationship of belonging (14). Weir argues, “as social beings, we depend on the construction of identities to create and sustain meaning: our identities allow us to be intelligible to each other and to ourselves, and are the sources of the affective, existential meanings that hold us together, as individuals and collectives” (3). Distinguishing identity categories (which are stable and

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37 Here I refer to my ethno-racial-identity attachments (Arab and Jewish), and my identity-politics attachments (queer person of colour).
fixed) from the practices of identification with (a practice), Weir argues for a return to identification to understand and reinvigorate politics.

However, identification is not in itself a solution to the problem of the political. Rather, I argue that identification is a process through which we achieve our attachments, which can be political, aesthetic, or otherwise. Identification is a process always already underway, and it is through attachment that identification is given meaning. When our identifications are wounded, we become attached to identities; when our identifications are ambivalent, we become attached to something else. Queer solidarities are a form of alternate attachment rooted in the ambivalent identifications of wounded and abject subjectivities. Queer solidarities are products of a dual process: what Georgis calls “the return to the site of abjection” (2013b, 15) of queer affects and what I call a turn to political attachments in the space of lost or failed identifications.

When queer affects unsettle us, we become more in touch with how collective stories and social identities are the mechanisms that settle fear, placate impossible desires, and provide narrative solutions to the difficulty of living with difference. What I am suggesting is that community is where we turn for safety especially when we are traumatized; the desires that are rendered antisocial to the community are what we must hand over for the right to belong. (16)

For Georgis, the unsettling effect of queer abjection is not permanent expulsion from belonging, but the ambivalent relationship to belonging that accompanies the requirement to conform to the symbolic order. Georgis proposes that the aesthetic is one place that we turn to for coping with this ambivalence; similarly, I argue that solidarity is another place that we turn. If queerness marks the limits or boundaries of social intelligibility in the symbolic order – where dominant social norms organize gender, the family and citizenship – then queer attachments must form through divergent routes. Juxtaposed against sexual-identity politics, which centers on a return to the symbolic order by rehabilitating the nation state through normalizing projects, like the fight for marriage equality, queer political attachments in the form of solidarity emerge through a relationship of identification that hopes to radically alter the symbolic order. The perversity of all solidarities is the intention to remake the world; as such, queer solidarities form under the

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38 Weir’s work suggests that the turn to identification with others through the diversity of identities (both gendered and racial) can overcome the limits of identity categories (e.g. the category women) that poststructural feminist critiques, such as Brown’s, have dismissed.
auspices of the already failed subjectivity in excess of normative belonging, and a refusal to return to the family or the nation to find safety.

Queer critiques of state practices, particularly those that position the nation state as exceptional through discourses of sexual rights, are the driving force behind queer solidarities in the queer Palestine movement. As such, attachments in the queer Palestine movement center on the transcendence of hegemonic configurations across heteronormative, militarized, and neoliberal orders that structure the present through war in the Middle East and the mobilization of sexual rights to justify these. In part, this kind of attachment is embedded in identification with alterity; orienting towards the other and building attachments in oppositional standpoints.

Returning to my field notes, my own desire for attachment and belonging in Beirut speaks to the importance of desire in building solidarity. Because solidarity is built on a projected desire for the liberation of the other, solidarity is a form of political identification reliant on a fantasy of the world remade. Here, our desires for our own fantasies of belonging merge with our political fantasies of new symbolic orders. As such, solidarity mediates between our political desires and the suffering and struggle of the other. In the space between my own investments in solidarity and those of building political alliances between Canada and the Middle East in the queer Palestine movement, it is necessary to consider how important attachments are to building solidarity at the same time that we remain aware of the risk that accompany our fantasies and attachments.

Because all attachments are risky, solidarity is equally at risk of unraveling our political desires through our attachments to the fantasies that keep our political appetites alive. Our visions of change are rarely universal, and the paths we take to accomplish these changes are even more dispersed. Logistically, this means that the conditions of transnational solidarity are always embroiled in tension and negotiation across the divergent visions, investments, fantasies and attachments both internal to groups and across geographic divides. For instance, what constitutes an effective gesture of solidarity in Toronto, with groups like QuAIA, versus groups in the Middle East may align and diverge. In Chapter 3, I examine a case study of this problem in the contestation over QuAIA’s participation in the Toronto Pride parade. This controversy became a central – albeit ambivalent – site of social and political transformation within the context of Canadian discursive investments in Israeli state practices; however, the space of the
Pride parade held opposing value for activists in the Middle East, who saw Pride as a vehicle of the normalizing force of homonationalism and the neoliberal nation state.

More than simply a critique of the nation state, the unfolding of risky attachments at Toronto Pride raises important questions about solidarity that lay the stakes of this project. Caught between the projects of the Canadian and Israeli nation states in war, borders and state security, on the one hand, and national liberation projects in the Palestinian struggle on the other hand, how do we orient our attachments and solidarities in an age when, as Jacqui Alexander (2005) puts it, “practices of dominance are simultaneously knitted into the interstices of multiple institutions as well as into everyday life” (4)? How do we examine the politics of attachment in transnational solidarity when our subconscious desires and motivations are so readily shaped by the ideological frameworks of neoliberal globalization?

Solidarity at Risk: Textured Methods for Neoliberal & Homonational Times

With more than a dozen groups working across North America, Europe and the Middle East (Appendix 2), the queer Palestine movement is distinct from other factions of the Palestine solidarity movement for its focus on the discursive and rhetorical realm of Israeli state practices. The central target of this transnational queer movement is aimed at the practice of pinkwashing, which marks a historic shift in the discursive practices of neoliberal nation building in the early 21st century. In practices of pinkwashing, nation-states increasingly deploy the language of rights and freedom in the late 20th and early 21st century, following the rise of neoliberal economic globalization and privatization. Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2013) describes this new form of state and transnational governance as “characterized by the privatization of the social justice commitments of post-1960s radical social movements and their attendant insurgent knowledges” (971).

Mohanty’s critique of the shift in social justice discourses is part of a larger concern in feminist and queer scholarship over the conditions of neoliberalism, the ideological and economic system governing late globalized capitalism. Following feminist critiques of the erosion of social welfare (Brodie 2002; Duggan 2003; Fraser 2005) and the rise of free market deregulation, privatization and growing individualism, concerns over the impact of neoliberalism
on social justice practices has looked not only at the practices of governments and transnational corporations, but also the impacts of shifting neoliberal ideologies on the practices of resistant discourses. Thus, in the period following mass movements for social change in the 1960s-70s, the implementation of new socialities (such as gender and race equality) were coopted in the neoliberal restructuring of state governance and global economic circuits, rather than radically transformed. As a result, 21st century rights discourses shifted from their origins in the liberal discourses of rights for the human (and an expansion on the category of the human), and later collective rights for groups, to increasing focus on individual rights.

The changing character of rights discourses, and the language of human rights in particular, under neoliberalism signals a shift in how claims for justice are made, and how solidarities are articulated. In his work on intersectionality, resistance and law reform, Dean Spade (2013) demonstrates that the post-civil rights era has seen a shift in collective rights, which have increasingly been supplanted by appeals to individual rights through the rise of legal equality in antidiscrimination law. The impact of these shifts in rights discourses, from collective to individual rights, has produced a crisis for contemporary social movements, whereby neoliberal logics have restructured the very terms through which injury and claims for justice are articulated. Neoliberalism therefore combines both an economic feature that redistributes the circuits of financial, production and consumer flows, with a discursive feature that redefines our understanding of the relationship between the individual and the collective. Under this new landscape of economic and social organization, we must revision solidarity and social justice practices, which I contend are impacted by the neoliberal shifts governing all social actors. As such, I am interested in the risks of solidarity, and the risks facing solidarity activism, in an era structured by the terms of neoliberalism.

However, neoliberal practices and ideologies have also shifted since the beginning of the 21st century, particularly following the start of the War on Terror in the post-9/11 period. In her groundbreaking work on the figure of the terrorist in US popular culture and foreign and domestic policies, Jasbir Puar (2007) describes the conditions of contemporary nation building as a convergence of new nationalisms, Orientalism, and a form of sexual imperialism that codifies through an exceptional status of US sexualities. Naming this convergence, homonationalism, she later describes her concept as not only a practice of contemporary state building initiatives, but a defining feature of contemporary modernity (Puar 2013, 337). Puar’s critique of national
security, militarization and torture is intimately connected to, and reliant on, a rise in “lesbian and gay liberal rights discourses and how those rights discourses produce narratives of progress and modernity that continue to accord some populations access to citizenship—cultural and legal—at the expense of the delimitation and expulsion of other populations” (337). As such, homonationalism describes the accelerated conditions of neoliberalism combined with imperializing practices of nation state building efforts in the War on Terror. Thus, we cannot understand the relationship between sexuality, human rights and sexual rights internationally without also understanding how free market economies and new techniques of governmentality coincide with the rising security states, militarization and war.

Turning to how solidarity is at risk in the age of neoliberalism and homonationalism highlights the pressing concerns over the impact of contemporary hegemonic ideologies on our ability to mobilize and build solidarity. Neoliberal logics structure the very parameters through which we can make claims for the political, and as such, neoliberalism constrains our ability to articulate and organize around solidarity. At the same time, homonationalism, which is both an ideological extension of neoliberalism and a periodization of globalized state practices in the era of the War on Terror, combines neoliberal governmentality to discourses of human rights and defines 21st century crises over LGBT rights, terrorism, national security and border regulation. As such, it is not only the practices of state governments that impede on the rights of groups; but also the practices of international aid agencies, NGOs, lobby groups, transnational corporations, human traffickers, free markets, black markets, tourism, and other features of transnational circuits today.

The concern over solidarity is all the more pressing at our historical juncture, which relies so heavily on solidarities for imagining the possibility of social change. As I will demonstrate in the chapters that follow, solidarity is largely imagined as the panacea for the fragmentation of social movements and the transformational potential lost under what Mohanty calls “neoliberal privatization and domestication of social justice commitments” (986). However, despite the hope that solidarity instills in social justice activists and even ambivalent poststructural theorists, it remains a concept that has yet to be reexamined under the conditions
of 21st century neoliberalism. Because solidarity has been almost exclusively theorized for a world shaped by liberal democracy and late capitalism, a golden age of social movement development following the civil rights and decolonization movements, we have yet to account for the impacts of neoliberal ideology on solidarities. As Duggan (2003), Puar (2007, 2013), Mohanty (2013) and others have demonstrated, neoliberalism has radically altered discourses of rights. Without account for these shifts, we risk losing sight of the dangers that solidarity can produce for transformational politics in neoliberal times.

Amidst a historic moment shaped by “market-based governance practices on the one hand (the privatization, commodification, and proliferation of difference) and authoritarian, national-security-driven penal state practices on the other” (Mohanty 2013, 970), the question of solidarity under neoliberalism and homonationalism requires careful consideration. Solidarity is most widely understood in contemporary social movements as the political collaboration, interdependence, fellow feeling, and coalitional possibility of connecting across difference and social locations. More than simply a practice, solidarity currently functions as a gauge of justice and ethics in social movements, and it holds weight in assessing the value of diverse forms of activism ranging from anti-capitalist, decolonizing, environmental and other justice movements.

To consider solidarity at risk is not to abandon solidarities because they may serve hegemonic interests, but rather to pull at the loose threads that threaten to unravel emergent social movements. That discourses of war and sexual rights might function in collaboration is an astonishing prospect when liberal narratives of human rights articulate these concepts as mutually exclusive. However, queer responses to the politics of the Middle East precisely highlight this process – where the language of sexual rights is launched in the defense of state violence. But why focus on queer activism when the scope and relevance of the larger anti-war,

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39 Most work on solidarity has focused on either theorizing solidarity through notions of interdependence and liberal democratic principles of civic participation, which I examine in Chapter 1. New research on solidarity in anti-globalization movements and the occupy movement have not yet retheorized solidarity under neoliberalism or homonationalism, however this field has captured many of the material and economic conditions that structure neoliberalism. There has been no research published on the relationship between solidarity and attachment, however transnational feminist theories of solidarity across difference (Mohanty 2003) and identification (Weir 2008) are foundational to my theorizing of solidarity as a politics of attachment.

40 Loosely defined by the post-WWII period to the 1980s.
anti-occupation, and anti-apartheid movements engaged in the politics of the Middle East make for a more apparent site for investigating activism? In part, my motivation for researching queer Palestine solidarity comes out of my own participation in this social movement. The relationship between my academic and activists interests has always overlapped. As an activist, my interests have focused on the educational and dialogic dimensions of organizing: producing media and information for dissemination; organizing public events, panels, and talks; facilitating workshops and educationals; and developing political analysis. As a scholar, my research has focused on the discursive, ideological, ethical and empirical aspects of activist practice, not only to trace activist emergences, but also to contribute to the development of social movements and transformational politics.

So, why the queer Palestine movement? Although I have an affinity for the larger Palestine solidarity movement, it was the queer movement that drew my interest and political imaginings. Yet despite my own attachments to queer activism, I do not want to simply celebrate queer solidarity here as exceptional. Rather, I examine queer activism in the Palestine solidarity movement to interrogate how queer responses to war, occupation and apartheid both challenge hegemonic paradigms under the conditions of what Andrea Smith (2010) calls hetero-patriarchy and face the risk of neoliberal cooption of activist struggles (Agathangelou et al. 2008; Mohanty 2013). Turning to the queer in the politics of solidarity activism, I aim to do more than simply celebrate queer activism. Instead, I consider the queerness of the queer Palestine movement as an analytic tool that redirects inquiry to the periphery or margins of larger social movements.

Turning to the margins is a central methodological and analytic approach in transnational feminism; it is therefore fitting that a queer turn in transnational solidarity activism would follow an analytic orientation like that of transnational feminism. As I discuss in Chapter 2, transnational feminism is built on the epistemologies of feminist standpoint theory, which turn to the experiences and epistemic privilege of marginalized and oppressed women as sources for feminist objectivity and knowledge (Haraway 1988; Hartsock 1983; hooks 1984; Anzaldúa 1987).

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41 The majority of research on social movements focuses on larger mass global scale actions and organizing. Traditional social movement theory has centered investigation of old social movements (i.e. labour movements) and new social movements (including women’s and feminist movements, civil rights, environment, and peace movements). For more on transnational social movements, see Reitan (2007).
1987; Harding 1993; Mohanty 2003). However, unlike the epistemic relationship that the margin represents for transnational feminism, the queer as margin offers another kind of analytic tool. Because queerness is situated at the limits of the symbolic order, queerness is proximal to the abject. However, unlike transnational feminism, which aims to center the voices of the margins for feminist theory and politics, queerness is never repositioned to the center. Thus, despite the marginal vantage point that queer may offer, it never centralizes a queer epistemology. Instead, queerness occupies the margin through an ambivalent relationship to both the margin and center. It is this tension – the ambivalence to the structure of knowledge – that I seek in orienting my project.

A substantial portion of contemporary research and writing produced on activism has focused on mass social movements (Ferree & Tripp 2006; Reitan 2007, 2009; Ruggiero 2008), such as the World Social Forum, anti-globalization movements, and now the Arab Spring (Agathangelou 2013). These sites are the most widely circulated, most inspiring, and most devastating examples of activism in our contemporary moment. They mark the possibilities of large-scale uprisings and shifts in our global economic, social and political configurations at the same time that they also remind us of the harsh limits of transformative justice in our contemporary period. With the brutality of state violence that emerged in response to each of these large-scale social movements, the external obstacles to movement building are certainly menacing. However, solidarity is also at risk within social movements, as the hegemonic ideologies of our times embed themselves in daily life.

Turning to the margins of activism and focusing on queer solidarity in the Palestine movement, I offer this project as more of an approach rather than an epistemology for contemporary movement building and the challenges that emerge that threaten to unravel our solidarities. Turning to the queer Palestine movement, I am not arguing that queer activism is marginalized; rather, I am proposing that queer activism is itself marginal, fringe, or queer. This distinction is important to make in the shift from the transnational feminist to queer frames I am working with. To be precise, I am suggesting that this work takes up a different kind of margin – a site of activism that desires interruption instead of inclusion – a desire to remain at the margin. In this shift, my turn to the margin seeks out difference, not in order to make claims to plurality or even the universal, but rather to imagine something new: to investigate how we can approach our doing of activism differently. Instead of interpreting activism in contemporary social
movements exclusively through the lens of mass movements, I want to attend to the specific to seek out a more nuanced, complicated, and contextual definition of solidarity for thinking about activism. This means using an interpretive lens that contends with attachment and identification in solidarity, rather than mapping political alliances, describing communities, or surveying movement demographics. I would like to propose that we call this turn the *texture of activist practice*, which is borrowed from Eve Sedgwick’s work in *Touching Feeling* (2003).

For Sedgwick, texture “comprises an array of perceptual data that includes repetition, but whose degree of organization hovers just below the level of shape or structure” (16). Just as a forest looks like a green mass from a plane, obscuring each individual tree from perception, and the grain of wood of a single tree offers a complex array of fibers, texture comprises the varying levels and approaches that we perceive and experience as we move through life. Sedgwick suggests that texture might bring us away from the fixation on epistemology and truth, or the impossibility of truth, and instead draws us to questions of phenomenology and affect, questions of what motivates and what invests us in attachments (17). To consider the texture of activism and activist practice is to seek out those motivations and attachments that function below the surface of activism. If activism’s surface is social, political and economic change, then what sits below it is the affective field that circulates when we are unable to accept life under conditions of subjugation and injustice.

From a psychoanalytic standpoint, activism can be understood as another form of interest that sustains us, and helps us to make sense of the world, to make life more bearable and livable. According to Adam Phillips (1998), for Freud “psychoanalysis was essentially about the fate of interest, about how each person sustains, or fails to sustain – attacks, sabotages, or gives up on – their appetite for life … In some contemporary versions of psychoanalysis this turns into the question, what has to happen to people to make them feel that the world is a promising place to live in” (65). Just as we turn to spirituality, therapy, and other mediums for transformation, activism marks another texture that fuels our desire for life – particularly a life made different through the transformation of our social, political and/or economic conditions. This is not to say that activism is an ideal site for structuring our appetites for life; rather, activism is one of many forms of interest that move us.
Conducting research on both theories of solidarity and critically assessing the practices of solidarity in the queer Palestine and anti-pinkwashing movement, I employ Sedgwick’s textured approach as a way to structure my methodology. Employing a combination of interdisciplinary research methods including discourse analysis, insider research, participant observation research, and auto-ethnography, this textured method involves multidimensional fields across geographic regions and forms of inquiry. Reflecting on my own practices of solidarity activism, the emergent forms of transnational activism in the queer Palestine movement, and the public responses to the interventions these movements make in media such as the news, blogs, websites, videos and editorials, I look to examples in the movement to parse out how solidarity is enacted and the features that place solidarity at risk.

In spite of the challenges of scholarly objectivity that come with researching a topic in which the investigator is embedded, there are numerous epistemic privileges (Hartsock 1983; Harding 1993) that accompany research on a social movement that the researcher is an active participant in. In particular, the analytic standpoint internal to activism can reveal nuanced challenges arising out of the everyday practices of activism that are invisible to the external researcher. For instance, how groups negotiate and articulate their relationships of solidarity is usually a continual process embedded with competing and sometimes conflicting interests. The flow of negotiation within activist practice and movement building is often less tangible and more ephemeral than scholarly work on solidarity and social movements is capable of capturing.

As a participant in the social movement I study, I occupy a hybrid position both internal and external to the field, which comprises international, local and discursive dimensions. These multiple standpoints are embedded in both the geographies of solidarity and the positioning of my own subjectivity across competing roles as participant, researcher and theorist. Internally within the queer Palestine movement, I am both an activist participant in the field and a contributor to the reshaping of the field through scholarly contributions in my role as a member of QuAIA Toronto and participant in the transnational networks that make up the queer movement. As such, the boundaries between academic and activist subjectivities are blurred in

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42 My contribution to QuAIA, for instance, has largely focused on writing, producing analysis for the group’s political interventions, and speaking publicly on QuAIA. Internationally, I have participated in the transnational
the everyday workings of my participation in the movement and research on it. Simultaneously, I am external to many facets of this social movement, particularly as a non-Arabic and non-Hebrew speaker located in Canada. Thus, a substantive portion of activism and politics in Palestine/Israel and Lebanon remains outside my purview, as only those texts in English and French are available to me. Because I do not aim to offer a comprehensive ethnography of the queer Palestine movement, I am at liberty to focus on the discursive rather than the ethnographic aspects of this movement.

Taking up texture as a methodological orientation for this project offers another approach for thinking about the field: alongside the insider/outsider, internal/external methods, a textured method invites flexible and fluid analytic and interpretive lenses. To imagine the texture of activism is to begin asking questions about the motivations and attachments that underlie activist interests; in particular, those processes that spur and inspire us to move, act, resist, rebel, escape, destabilize, shake, disrupt, etc. Although how things change and what they change into is usually accidental (activism is a business of visions, not predictions), turning to the texture of solidarity and activism is one way of producing a methodology for examining transformation.

At its core, this project is a reflection on how we imagine change; how we work against the unbearable conditions produced through asymmetrical social, political, and economic structures and how we imagine new ways of being in the world. It is my attempt to grapple with the pragmatic, ethical, and psychic problems of doing activism, being an activist, and struggling with the paradox of pushing against configurations of power and subjugation when faced with the impossibility of suspending or escaping those processes that (re)produce asymmetry. More than anything, this work is not a commentary on the ideal of justice, but rather a reflection on how we articulate the desire for justice and how we desire to imagine different social and political configurations. Although these questions are abstract and philosophical, they are rooted in the active conditions of contemporary activism and activist practice. They are questions about what we do when we do activism, and how we can approach this doing differently. I want to network of movement activism, such as my participation in the 2012 World Social Forum: Free Palestine queer gathering.
resist prescribing how to do activism, although prescription is sometimes unavoidable, and instead offer an approach to thinking about activism so we can better reflect on those doings. As Georgis (2013b) reminds us, “we are not obliged to live by the stories that no longer help us live well” (26). In keeping with her proposal to read for the better story, I endeavor to read solidarity as a textured practice rather than political ideal.

Chapter 1, Solidarity and the Textures of Attachment, examines the concept of solidarity more precisely through its historic emergence, its role in early social movements and how it has been theorized in the last quarter of the 20th century within the fields of political theory and philosophy. I offer a critical analysis of the political and ethical stakes of solidarity in the contemporary context where the conditions of globalization simultaneously dissolve the boundaries of the nation state and intensify those boundaries through models of state security. I contend that the climate of early 21st century neoliberalism and globalization alter the dimensions of solidarity’s field, and as such, we need new work for both theorizing solidarity and investigating its practice in our contemporary moment. Further, I consider solidarity in relation to an array of other registers of attachment, or the texture of attachments, that come out of critical theories of solidarity and the political, including friendship, love, compassion, empathy and kindness. By placing solidarity in conversation with these other registers of attachment, I demonstrate how solidarity is a textured feature of the political.

Chapter 2, The Risk of Difference: Transnational Feminism, Queer Solidarity, and the Trouble with Attachments, turns to the history of solidarity across difference. Beginning with the problem of feminist solidarity emergent in the women’s rights movement in the US through the language of global sisterhood, I examine how anti-racist and postmodern feminist critiques of universal feminism transformed the basis of articulating feminist solidarity. I then examine how transnational feminism emerged as a field of feminist theory and practice that attempted to reconcile the problem of difference, largely through the adoption of intersectionality and through a turn to solidarity. However, the evidence of continued fragmentation in feminist social

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43 For instance, I cannot claim that solidarity is at risk without assessing certain practices of solidarity as failures.

44 See Jenny Burman’s (2010) work on transnationalism for more on the relationship between increasing restrictions in border securitization and global circuits across borders via travel, migration, and communication technologies.
movements in the 21st century reveal that the turn to solidarity across difference is not substantive on its own for rehabilitating feminist solidarity. Bringing transnational feminist and queer theories and activist practices together, I conclude the chapter by offering an interpretive use of poststructural feminist deconstruction for recuperating an understanding of difference in feminist and queer solidarities.

Chapter 3, Risk, Desire and Adaptation: The Paradox of Queer Solidarity Under Neoliberalism & Homonationalism, begins with the 2015 retirement of the Toronto-based group, QuAIA and my role in the group’s closure. Examining the relationship between risk, desire and adaptation, I survey the case of QuAIA’s history at the Toronto Pride Parade and the annual attempts to ban the group from Pride. Using my reflections on QuAIA’s activist successes and failures, I discuss how QuAIA’s battle to march in the Pride parade reveals key ways that solidarity is at risk and the neoliberal ideologies underlying this risk through discourses of sexual citizenship and homonationalism, which structured controversy over QuAIA’s name and the term “Israeli apartheid.” These debates marked a site of new citizenship making for queer subjects in the contemporary neoliberal nation state, a quintessential example of homonationalism; however, I also argue that the logics of homonationalism permeated the discursive field of QuAIA’s gestures of solidarity, and there emerged a trope that threatened to undermine transnational solidarity. Here, the complex relationship between desire to engage in solidarity activism and our risky attachments is teased out to demonstrate the insidious effects of neoliberalism and homonationalism on social movement practices.

Chapter 4, Adaptation and Transformation: Queerness, Affect and the Activist Imaginary, ends this project with a discussion of textured activism and its affective life. I argue that queerness offers a salient and innovative framework that can assist the work of affect theory in advancing new questions in how we think about solidarity and activism. Beyond the movement for sexual liberation, queer interventions challenge the turn to normalization and inclusion, and instead open up the possibility for imagining transformation beyond the nation state, and beyond the limits of the neoliberal imaginary under homonationalism. This does not mean that queer movements must exceed the nation, but rather that they might accomplish a sidestepping of those projects. Considering the importance of adaptation and transformation, this final chapter proposes that we must cultivate a consideration for the textured dynamics of activist imaginaries to assist social movement practices in the neoliberal era. I end by proposing hints, orientations,
provocations and considerations to assist us in reimagining transformative activist practices and the work of solidarity in daily life.

Grounding each chapter is the provocation that if we do not carefully consider the ways solidarity is at risk, whether through neoliberal cooption or the betrayal of our attachments, we threaten the sustainability and viability of our emergent social movements in the 21st century. This is not to say that we must sustain social movements at all costs, but that we do a disservice to our activist commitments if we do not weigh the risks underlying the practices we have taken for granted. It is not enough to imagine that social movements do good; we must instead think of how our social movements are doing, and seek out adaptive practices that can carry us through shifting political, social and economic landscapes.

In Touching Feeling, Eve Sedgwick (2003) 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 in political discourses intervenes into tropes that both theorists and activists have relied on for articulating political identity and agency. Sedgwick’s work in Touching Feeling 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).

Connecting my fieldwork in Lebanon to my research on solidarity and the queer Palestine movement, this dissertation situates the desire for cross-border attachment within the context of queer solidarity. I began with Beirut and the terms of attachment and belonging that animated my fieldwork and my own attachments, and then considered the politics of attachment and political identification in solidarity activism. By turning to the space between solidarity’s attachments and queer desires for belonging, I propose that we can highlight the pressing concerns that place solidarity at risk in returning to the question of the middle range or in-between. This means attending to the tensions, ambivalences and disjunctures across multiple contexts and locations both locally and transnationally. It also entails embedding into the political projects of solidarity an attentiveness to risk. By risk, I mean that we need to actively discuss how our attachments inform our political orientations and projects, and how these same attachments might undermine those very projects. This consideration for the risk of solidarity in attachment is made all the
more urgent within the landscape of transnationalism, which relies so heavily on solidarities for imagining the possibility of social change across a globalized world.
Chapter 1

Solidarity and the Texture of Attachment

On January 14, 2010, while on a trip to Los Angeles, I attended an event hosted by Code Pink, a US-based women-initiated grassroots organization opposing war and occupation. Less than a month earlier, a group of American delegates from Code Pink had traveled to Egypt to participate in the Gaza Freedom March, an international solidarity action calling for the end of the blockade on Gaza on the anniversary of the 2009 Gaza War. Participants had planned to cross into Gaza for the march, however when the Egyptian government closed the Rafah border in mid-December 2009, it blocked the Gaza Freedom March from both crossing the border and delivering aid supplies into Gaza. Despite the border closure, members of Code Pink joined other activists on a bus to Rafah to attempt to cross into Gaza. This group was held at length on their bus, and eventually they were denied entry and sent back to Cairo.

At the event held two weeks later in a Venice, California church hall, members of Code Pink recounted their experiences in Egypt, facing police harassment and the grueling bus-ride to the border. A member of Code Pink who had been invited to join a select group of international activists on the bus shared her experience in Egypt and her feelings at being denied entry into Gaza. As the gates into Gaza closed on her and the other activists from the bus, the young woman felt, for the first time in her life, the weight of injustice at being denied her freedom of movement. Her story was neither unique nor exceptional, countless people are denied freedom of movement daily across the world through visa restrictions, immigration detention, border controls, raids on undocumented workers, criminalization, incarceration, and security/separation walls and fences, to name a few. Nonetheless, in the years since I attended the Code Pink report back, this woman’s story has weighed on my mind. Despite the disdain I felt for a story about an American who was denied the right to cross a border, it was this story – not the stories of those under siege in Gaza – that occupied my thoughts.

The relationship between narrative and remembering here is important – as Georgis (2013b) argues, “the stories we tell about ourselves, about others, about world events, about the past, about our political beliefs, about our identities are not just simply social and political
constructions but elaborations of our psychic dramas” (xi). If the stories we tell about our solidarities reveal the unconscious desires and investments that guide our activist practices, then we need to interrogate our narratives around solidarity. Although the young woman’s participation in the Gaza Freedom March was undoubtedly a gesture of solidarity with the Palestinians under siege, her account, as a story of her own suffering, failed to extend her experience to a call for solidarity. Absent were the lives of Palestinians, the effects of the blockade on daily life in Gaza, and the wider conditions of militarism and border control that contextualized the barring of the solidarity bus into Gaza that December. But her failure was also my failure, because her story caught hold of my own uncertainties about the ethics of solidarity; and rather than confront my own limits and attachments in solidarity, I dismissed her account as an example of bad activism.

At one level, the Code Pink event clearly reveals a limit to solidarity, whereby its gesture is translated from collective to individual interests under neoliberal individualism: the siege on Gaza became a siege on the individual freedom of an American. The dissonance between the promise of solidarity’s gesture and the failure in meeting that anticipated promise was all the more striking against the backdrop of Gaza, a place many have called the world’s largest open-air prison.45 It was easy for me to critique the Code Pink event because the pedagogical moment around Palestinian rights that was promised at the report back was lost, if only because the tale of suffering failed to translate into a call for action. At the very least, the woman’s story held an opportunity to extend the psychic effects of the blockade from an individual experience to a collective struggle, but this too was missing. I could conclude my analysis of the Code Pink event here, as a critique of failed activism; however, if we are to consider the risks of solidarity seriously, then I cannot simply dismiss Code Pink’s report back as a case of failed solidarity alone. Rather, my proposal to consider the texture of activist practice means looking carefully at these kinds of moments of so-called failure to understand how the competing interests of neoliberal ideologies and our desire to change the world are entangled.

If the purpose of a textured reading of solidarity is to bring an attentiveness to risk, then the problem of solidarity that the Code Pink case reveals is not that there are good or bad

45 For perspective, the Gaza strip spans a geographic area equivalent to the size of a city like Montreal or Detroit
activists, but that there are complex attachments underlying our gestures that risk compromising solidarity. Gada Mahrouse’s (2008, 2011, 2014) work on racialized power relations in solidarity activism reveals that despite the intentions of activists – even within the Palestine solidarity movement, such as humanitarian observer programs and solidarity tours – gestures of solidarity risk valorizing the solidarity activist and transferring the experience of suffering onto the activist as a spectator of violence. While Mahrousse’s critique speaks to the racial components attached to risk, whereby the power relations of white supremacy are replicated in the gesture of solidarity of white activists from the global north, I am interested in the expanded conditions produced by neoliberalism that make even marginalized subjects capable of reinforcing hegemonic power.

Chandra Mohanty (2013) argues that neoliberal ideologies “discursively construct a public domain denuded of power and histories of oppression, where market rationalities redefine democracy and collective responsibility is collapsed into individual characteristics” (971). For Mohanty, the result of this process effectively de-radicalizes radical theory by translating political speech acts into consumable commodities in the academy, as well as state and transnational bodies (such as government institutions, NGOs, and non-profits). In Mohanty’s critique of neoliberalism, we can see the impact of ideological shifts on political speech. Although she returns to the figure of the antiracist, anti-imperialist feminist activist as a site for recuperating the political possibility of radical theory (983), I argue that within a landscape acclimated to the logics of neoliberal governmentality, all political subjects – and all political speech acts and actions – are at risk of reinforcing neoliberal interests. Thinking about neoliberalism and its effects on resistant discourses, we must contend with the conditions that place all solidarities at risk, not simply those occupying a hegemonic subject position. Thus, if we are going to try to recuperate solidarity, then we cannot do so by simply removing the bad (the bad feelings, the failed gestures, the power inequalities); rather, we must examine the slippage into what we might be tempted to call bad solidarity as a place where we can bring our attention to the question of risk.

46 See Gada Mahrouse’s (2011) work on what she refers to as “feel-good tourism,” or political tourism, where the failure of solidarity is all the more damaging because witnessing is more immediate to the spectator. Also see Sara Koopman’s (2008) work on imperialism within social movements.
The suspension of good/bad dichotomies in thinking about solidarity runs counter to the leading narrative circulating in contemporary activist cultures, which relies on distinguishing between good activism and bad politics. Because solidarity is widely valorized as an ethical ideal for orienting the political, the over-reliance on solidarity as a principled vehicle for doing good makes it vulnerable to the machinations of neoliberal ideology. I am not suggesting that solidarity necessarily serves neoliberalism; I am arguing that neoliberalism has an incredible capacity to structure and embed its logics in our gestures, attachments and narratives. If left unexamined, solidarity risks the same fate as the proverbial road to hell, which is paved with good intentions. Solidarity is at risk of serving hegemonic interests and unraveling the transformative potential of social movements when we leave the underlying ideologies structuring those gestures unexamined. I began this chapter with the Code Pink case because it is exemplary of this kind of risk; but I am also interested in how my own responses to the report back flag a risk as well. If solidarity is a risky endeavor, if our good intentions and attachments can betray us, then we need to think of solidarity as something other than a political ideal.

In the Introduction, I proposed a methodological approach to studying social movement practices that understands solidarity as a texture of activist practice, a form of attachment embedded in our capacities and desires for belonging, identification, alliance and community. I am interested in the texture of attachments that accompany discourses of solidarity, such as kindness, empathy, friendship, love, and compassion. These attachments are part of solidarity’s lexicon, circulating in the discourses around which solidarity as a concept has developed from its origins in the Enlightenment to its contemporary use in social movements and activist cultures. If we are to take solidarity seriously, we must examine the horizon it attempts to achieve in tension with its practices in daily life. This is perhaps the anticipatory role of all attachments, whereby our desires for attachment already exceed the capacity of our attachments to hold us together. Thus, my own anticipation for producing good solidarity forecloses my capacity to hold onto solidarity in its contradictory form in my Code Pink example. As such, it is only by thinking about solidarity and its textured attachments as already at risk that I might be able to recuperate the political possibility of solidarity.

The good/bad dichotomy of activist cultures is perhaps a meaningful scene in my own psychic dramas as an activist who was very much invested in constructing good activism and denouncing the bad.
Beginning with the origins of the concept, its etymology and history, I am interested in the texture of solidarity’s emergences across early forms of political alliance that develop out of models of liberal democracy. From this historical work, I next turn to some of the textures of attachment that accompany solidarity: kindness, empathy, friendship, love, and compassion. These registers of emotional attachment, which attend to the interconnected and relational aspects of belonging, reveal both the limits and the anticipatory desires of solidarity as a form of political attachment. I conclude the chapter with a look at another example of solidarity at risk in a public debate that transpired on the online publication, Jadaliyya, in 2012. Through this case, I consider how our attachments place solidarity at risk under the conditions of neoliberalism, which structure our very capacities to act and have those actions interpreted.

A Textured History of Solidarity

Historically, early forms of solidarity emerged out of post-Enlightenment thinking, through the rise of democratic models of civic participation and liberal models of individualism, which converged in the early class struggles in modern Europe. Today, solidarity holds a different, albeit connected, role in social movements. Circulating in activist discourses and social movement practices as both a central framework for activism and as a unifying force behind collective organizing, the concept of solidarity is central to almost all forms of activism in a globalized world. As such, solidarity holds multiple functions: internally structuring activist movements; contributing to cohesion across interests within groups; building external relationships across geographic and identity-based differences; and facilitating collaboration, alignments and affinities across diverse political projects and interests. However, despite the extensive use of solidarity as a core practice of contemporary activism, research on solidarity has remained largely isolated to the domains of social solidarity (Durkheim 1984), civic solidarity

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48 See Pensky (2008) for more on the origins of solidarity historically in philosophy, or Gaztambide-Fernández (2012) for a summary of other work on the history of solidarity in Europe.

49 For instance, my own early experiences with solidarity activism put me in contact with Montreal-based solidarity groups such as Solidarity Across Borders, a migrants rights justice group and Tadamoun!, which means solidarity in Arabic and organizes in solidarity with Lebanese and regional radical political struggles.

50 For example, in mass mobilizations against the World Trade Organization
(Calhoun 2002; Mouffe 1995; Pensky 2008), sociology of social movements (Reitan 2011; Ruggiero & Montagna 2008), political solidarity (Day 2001; Featherstone 2012; Scholz 2008) and feminist solidarity (Cohen 1997; Conway 2010; Hemmings 2012; Mohanty 2003). Across these fields, solidarity is largely taken up in work examining democratic political life, both locally under models of the cosmopolitan or multicultural landscape (Derrida 2002; Gaztambide-Fernández 2012; Hardt & Negri 2004; Mouffe 1996), and transnationally under the forces of neoliberal globalization (Chavez 2011, 2013; Conway 2010; Dufour et al. 2010; Reitan 2007, 2009, 2011). In both cases, the concept of solidarity functions as a foundation for interpreting political agency and contestation under the modern nation state, whether these works focus on democratic civil society or resistance movements.

In the literature published on solidarity to date, there has been little overlap between theories or philosophies of solidarity and detailed analysis of the practices and challenges of solidarity activism in contemporary social movements. This has left a significant gap in the literature, with texts that either take up the question of solidarity through primarily theoretical and philosophical frameworks (as we find in civic, political and some feminist frameworks), or they focus on a descriptive account of solidarity activism through more qualitative assessments of solidarity’s practices and challenges (especially in the work of sociology of social movements, social solidarity, and some forms of feminist solidarity). As a solidarity activist and scholar, I felt this divide quite acutely at the early stages of my research, as the texts I read left many of my primary concerns and questions about my own practices of solidarity unanswered. I found myself attempting to translate theories of solidarity in my activist practices, and translating my concerns about activist practices back into the language of critical theory.

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51 With some exception, such as Gada Mahrouse’s (2014) work on race and transnational solidarity activism and Karma Chavez’s (2013) work on coalitional politics in queer migrant justice movements in the US.

52 My entry into the literature on solidarity came through my engagement with transnational feminist theory. The early influence of hooks (1986), Mohanty (2003), Sandoval (2000) on my thinking left me inspired, but without direction for how to practice these forms of anti-colonial and intersectional solidarity in the transnational anti-war and anti-occupation movements I participated in.

53 Much of my work in QuAIA involved translating critical theory concepts for activist praxis, such as Duggan’s work on (2002) homonormativity, Puar’s (2007) concept of homonationalism, gay imperialism and Joseph Massad’s (2007) gay International. Most of this work was for internal use, introducing the concepts in reading groups, workshops or during meetings. I also published some of this translation work (Kouri-Towe 2012).
Although critical scholarship clearly offers thoughtful insights into the concept of solidarity historically, theoretically and in practice, this body of work remains cursory in comparison to the vast literature pertaining to issues of social justice more broadly.\textsuperscript{54} Solidarity is often introduced in these texts as a conclusion, an assumed basis of understanding, or a hopeful possibility for the future of social justice. Historically however, solidarity was not necessarily tied to questions of justice. The concept first arose during the Enlightenment through the civic ideal of fraternity, and only later came to be understood as “a strong bonding between members of subordinated groups in a condition of sociopolitical asymmetry” (Pensky 2008, 3). Early use of this political form of solidarity emerged through socialism (7), and it developed across the 20\textsuperscript{th} century through the new social movements of the civil rights and decolonization era, particularly in the period between WWII and the 1980s.\textsuperscript{55} In its contemporary form, solidarity is primarily understood as a core practice and ethical principle of social movements to describe the practice of political alignment across differences in liberatory struggles for justice. It is also still used in some areas of political philosophy to refer to the civic participation of citizens within democracy. Across the many ways solidarity has been understood, it has consistently been employed as “an idealized referent” (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012, 46) for connection across differences and/or similarities.

The etymology of the word solidarity can be traced to the French word \textit{solidarité} or \textit{solidaire}, which means interdependence. “Solidarity refers, first and foremost, to the status of \textit{intersubjectivity}, in which a number of persons are \textit{bound} together, whether by the facts of their existing needs or their interpretations of their own interests, into definite \textit{relations}” (Pensky, 9, emphasis original). To be in solidarity is to be unified or connected across common interests. Therefore in its original sense, solidarity refers to a mode of relationality, which describes how we come to connect across differences through common investments.\textsuperscript{56} In the period of

\textsuperscript{54} Fields such as postcolonialism, critical race theory, feminism, theories of social movements, and political philosophy and theory, among others, all tackle questions of social inequalities and sometimes even bring up the question of solidarity, however very few of these fields devote substantive attention to theorizing solidarity.

\textsuperscript{55} Wendy Brown remarks that Marx’s argument for freedom \textit{with} others, as opposed to freedom \textit{from} others/institutions, brought about the inseparability of the individual from the collective that has come to shape contemporary political attachments (2006, 26).

\textsuperscript{56} Later, solidarity “was adopted by biologists and sociologists to indicate bonds of commonality” (Scholz, 6).
Enlightenment, the fraternal dimensions of solidarity’s early usage were connected to shifts in the public sphere towards democratic civic engagement. Rooted in the emergent values of liberal democracy, solidarity as a form of intersubjectivity functioned to advance the interests of the individual through the common goals shared with others. The collective dimension of solidarity, in this sense, was embedded in the mutual advancement of individual interests shared across political goals, rather than kinship affiliations.

Within the field of political philosophy, solidarity developed alongside theories of liberal democracy, civic engagement, fraternity and the public. When we talk about solidarity in the 21st century, however, we generally refer to the traditions emerging out of political solidarity rather than fraternity or commonality. As it is currently used, solidarity refers to “a moral relation that marks a social movement wherein individuals have committed to positive duties in response to perceived injustice” (Scholz, 6). Thus, solidarity functions in contemporary social movements as a foundational ethics for organizing and articulating political alignments across difference (be they identity-based or interest-based).

Some political philosophers have also taken up solidarity in more insidious ways, using the concept as a tool for nation building (Spinner-Halev 2008), or as a way to harness citizenship in neoliberal consumer capitalism (Spinosa et al. 1997). Here, solidarity is theorized in the interest of serving neoliberal state power and globalized capital by drawing on aspects of cooperation and identification within solidarity to build complicity across citizen and consumer publics. Although this work on solidarity is fairly obscure, even within the fields of governance and marketing, it raises important concerns for the role of solidarity in transformational politics. If solidarity can serve the interests of capitalism and the neoliberal nation state, is this at odds with its principled use within liberatory social movements? Since political solidarity in its contemporary usage first emerged through Marxist and socialist revolutionary frameworks, the translation of solidarity into the mechanisms of the neoliberal nation state threaten to evacuate the concept from its relationship to the politics of resistance. This flags a concern over the limits of solidarity in relation to the neoliberal nation state and its institutions, particularly if activists

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57 Sally Scholz distinguishes political solidarity from other forms of solidarity (5), however my interest in contemporary transnational social movements is largely focused on the political forms.
use solidarity as an ethical framework for movement building. Although the over-determination of the nation state in this insidious form of solidarity is empirically at odds with its application within social movements – which increasingly transcend the nation, such as the World Social Forum and anti-globalization movements (Conway 2010; Reitan 2007, 2009) – the mobilization of solidarity to serve hegemonic systems suggests that the ethics of solidarity needs examination.

Apart from the insidious uses of solidarity to serve neoliberalism, political philosophy has taken up solidarity both in the interests of building cohesion within and contestation over the modern nation state. For Craig Calhoun (2002), the public sphere represents a site for social solidarity, and “its counterparts are families, communities, bureaucracies, markets, and nations” (159). This model of solidarity employs the concept to refer to the process of “joining together” in a society. Calhoun’s model of solidarity centers on interdependency and citizen investments in the state, rather than in juxtaposition or opposition to state formations, which in turn assumes democracy to be the ideal political model for organizing contemporary life. The investment in liberal democracy has primarily shaped political philosophy-based theories of solidarity, which presume that the act of coming together defines solidarity in collectivity under the nation state. Although public engagement with civil society and appeals to the nation state do make up some components of contemporary solidarity activism, social movements also develop without a coherent relationship to institutions, the state, or to collective identities. Activist solidarities are often rooted in more abstract affiliations, orientations and investments than Calhoun’s model.

58 Like other models of solidarity that refer to fraternity or collaboration, Calhoun employs solidarity synonymously with cooperation and community. Building on Emile Durkheim’s distinction between mechanical solidarity (a type of shared or collective identity) and organic solidarity (interdependence in differentiated societies), Calhoun outlines his own model of social solidarity – which I will refer to as the interdependency model – in 4 forms: (1) functional interdependence, which describes the system through which we are interdependent (e.g. the flow of goods in an economy); (2) categorical identities, which refer to our common understanding of identities (e.g. nation, race, class); (3) direct social relations, which describe what we might understand as community in the micro-context, and networks under the macro-context of the nation state; and (4) publics, which he argues is the rational-critical discourse in public regarding affairs of common concern (160-162).

59 I use the term liberal on purpose to juxtapose against the possibility for other forms of democracy, which is a notion that I draw from Derrida’s (2005) concept of democracy to come.
makes available. This is especially true in the case of transnational solidarity, where shared systems, such as globalization, produce indirect forms of interconnection.\footnote{For example, a group in Canada claiming solidarity with Palestinians does not rely on a reciprocal connection between Canadian activists and Palestinians, nor does it rely on a stable site of contestation (e.g. the nation state, queer community, civil society, international law).}

In practice, Calhoun’s interdependency model of solidarity, rooted in liberal democracy, may be useful for thinking and talking about some forms of difference in the modern nation state. For example, proponents of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism celebrate the capacity of solidarities across difference to bring value to new forms of social cohesion.\footnote{Multicultural publics may be imagined as sites of expanded democracy. However, multicultural models of the public take up difference without questioning how differences are produced through hegemonic systems and structures, see Gilroy (2000) and Ahmed (2007) for critiques of multiculturalism. Further, proponents of cosmopolitanism as a site for solidarity, like Calhoun, emphasize the importance of the role of the nation state, see Kendall \textit{et al.} (2008).} Nevertheless, there is a limit to modeling solidarity on the relationship between citizens and the nation state, especially because the nation state is largely the source of expulsion and exclusion that gestures of solidarity aim to resist, for example through criminalization or deportation. While all movements require a component of \textit{coming together}, there are limits to solidarity rooted in the liberal democratic nation state. Many contemporary new social movements, such as anti-globalization, environmentalism and anti-war politics, are embedded in frameworks of coming together in \textit{opposition} to the state, or outside of state institutions. We find these forms of solidarity in grassroots organizing, collectives, communes, counter-publics, subcultures, anarchist networks, world social forums, global networks, and partnerships (e.g. with NGOs). Sometimes these movements press for reform at the level of the nation state, but other times, they produce new publics.\footnote{For example, Hardt & Negri (2004) call the global transformative possibility of democracy “the multitude” (328).} Further, internal divisions within coalitions and competing interests in mass social movements suggest that modeling solidarity on a stable notion of interdependency misses key ways that tension and contestation are embedded in practices of solidarity.

The overdetermination of liberal democracy in framing solidarity within political philosophy also raises concerns over how we imagine the future. Chantal Mouffe (1996) argues, “envisaging democratic advances as if they were linked to progresses in rationality is not helpful
… we should stop presenting the institutions of liberal Western societies as offering the rational solution to the problem of human coexistence” (4). Mouffe is critical of the suggestion that liberalism can itself offer pragmatic solutions to the problem of democracy, and rejects the vision of progress through the universalization of liberal democracy (7). Her critique suggests that we need to look to other models and frameworks for political engagement, beyond liberal democracy, to help imagine the possibility of transformative engagement. However, in her work on democratic action in multicultural liberal democracies, Mouffe argues for a model of solidarity built on pluralism that appears to nonetheless rely on the structuring frameworks of the neoliberal nation state for imagining the possibility of political agency. In an earlier work, Mouffe (1995) argues that it is “through institutions that solidarity is created and maintained” (101). She argues that solidarity as a practice of democratic society can be best actualized through the multiplication of institutions to encompass a diverse population, a form of pluralist democracy. Such a model aims to transform the landscape of coexistence by embedding the institutions of the nation state, rather than the nation state itself, in the contested conditions of difference and plurality.

Mouffe’s reliance on institutions for articulating solidarity, however, exposes a challenge for her suggestion that we move beyond liberal democracy for solidarity. Although she is critical of liberal models of democracy, Mouffe continues to rely on the institutional and structural frameworks embedded in liberal democratic societies – in the form of diversified or pluralistic institutions, which proliferated in the decentralization and privatization of government services and resources in the neoliberal restructuring of the nation state.63 Because institutions are neither universal nor ahistorical, they are never outside of the ideologies and power structures of liberal democracy and neoliberalism. If we look at feminist critiques of neoliberalism, research on women’s political participation demonstrates that the institutionalization of democratic practices can actually inhibit solidarity and transformational possibility, rather than sustain it. Nira Yuval-Davis (1997, 2006) and other critics64 of the NGOization of feminist social movements have

63 See Janine Brodie’s (2002) work on the neoliberal restructuring of welfare in Canada for more on the decentralization of resources.
64 The critique of the institutionalization of women’s movements is part of a wider debate in feminist movements globally, such as the breakout session titled “The NGOization Of Women's Movements And Its Implications For
argued that the redirection of political energies into institutions threatens to embed activism in the mechanisms of neoliberal governance structures. In the case of Palestinian women’s organizing, for example, Islah Jad (1995) argues that the post-Oslo landscape saw an influx of international funds that transformed Palestinian women’s activism through the institutionalization of women’s movement activities into NGOs, altering the capacities of Palestinian women’s movements to lead popular mobilization in the national liberation struggle (239).  

If institutional attachments are insubstantial for transformative processes, then we need to consider the limits and possibilities of institutions for our solidarities. Although institutions offer some possibility for social change, I remain skeptical of any model of solidarity that relies too heavily on the model of institutions for sustaining political solidarities. Instead, I propose that we think of institutions as one possible landscape through which the political is engaged with. Further, social movements do not require institutions or state structures to coordinate and collectivize solidarities. Although some alliances are made in relation to institutions, solidarities coalesce along other affinities and attachments. Thus, we can envision solidarity that aims to transform society without rehabilitating the nation state or its institutions. Here, we find the possibility of transformation at the level of discourse, ideology, normalization, and other features of daily life that certainly influence institutions, but do not primarily aim to rehabilitate institutions. For instance, the queer Palestine movement organizes around a central critique of

65 Following the rise of women’s leadership during the First Intifada from 1987 to 1993, the post-Oslo peace process introduced institutionalized support for women’s interests, which translated women’s leadership roles into employment structures reliant on funding bodies.

66 I do not intend to outright dismiss all the accomplishments of NGOs. For instance, despite her critique of NGOization, Jad (1995) sees the strengths of institutionalization for women’s rights in Palestine, particularly in the quasi-governmental women’s committees and their relationship to the Palestinian Authority (244).

67 For example, while the prison abolition movement mobilizes around the institution of the prison industrial complex, the shared basis for building solidarity branches much more widely across groups. Indeed, there is no aim to pluralize the institution of the prison system, while introducing reforms simultaneous to attempts to abolish the institution itself (Spade 2013; Davis & Rodriguez 2000; Davis & Dent 2001)
Israeli state practices, but the project of solidarity does not aim to rehabilitate the Israeli nation state, such as by including queer Palestinians in Israeli society. Rather, solidarity in the queer movement aims to contest the status quo of a hegemonic system and aims to foundationally transform the nation state (i.e. end apartheid), but does not necessarily envision this transformation as one that introduces plurality into current institutions. Thus, solidarity serves a specific function in social movements, not simply as a characteristic of public life, but as a set of attachments in tension and contestation over the arrangements of institutions.

Affirming the contested, ambivalent, and tenuous conditions that structure solidarities, I turn to Jacque Derrida’s work on democracy for thinking about the relationship between political contestation and structuring institutions. Derrida (2002) argues that the key to the political is to think of a model of “equality that would not be homogeneous, that would take heterogeneity, infinite singularity, infinite alterity into account” (179). Derrida’s provocation towards alterity offers a possibility for rehabilitating the democratic focus of solidarity within political philosophy. To do so, he turns to the concept of friendship and a more ephemeral model of democracy to consider how we might rethink the political. Derrida mobilizes friendship and democracy, not so much in their historic or even current manifestations through the Enlightenment, the rise of liberal democracy or through fraternity; instead, he invites us to imagine the possibility of friendship and democracy in “democracy to come, which is not the future of democracy, [rather it] is what this work is striving toward” (179). Derrida goes on to argue that what is “important in ‘democracy to come’ is not ‘democracy,’ but ‘to come’” (182). Future possibility is thus dependent on a practice that is not democracy per se, but rather a practice that prevents the foreclosure of democracy in the present as we take up alterity as a necessary condition for making better futures. Derrida’s proposal that we turn to the to come, which is a turn towards alterity and the subject positions marginalized or expelled from the social order, requires more thinking if we want to apply it to solidarity.

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68 I should note that there are models of solidarity that aim to rehabilitate the nation state, for instance in models of Palestine solidarity calling for some versions of a pluralist multicultural Israeli society.

69 Although Derrida sees contemporary democracy to be an improvement on monarchy and other political systems, he is unsatisfied with its current state, and only uses the term because as it is the “least lousy” available (181).
Democracy to come performs some of the textured work I am interested in for thinking about solidarity. If democracy is something never achieved but rather is a process without end in sight, then perhaps we can think of the texture of solidarity as a relationship of attachments bridged by a process of alignments. Contrary to models of solidarity that aim to coalesce around stable connections across people and groups (such as through attachments to institutions), a textured model for political attachments has the capacity to hold both the interdependency of people and the unintelligibility and limits of difference that make collectivity such a difficult ideal. For instance, models of solidarity that center on binding a cohesive and participatory public for sustaining civic engagement, which both Calhoun and Mouffe appear to advocate for, are inadequate for assessing the work of contemporary social movements. Since solidarity activism functions largely at the margins of society and in tension with the institutions of the state, any account of contemporary solidarity must consider that there is an ambivalence to the state and its institutions that exists within the efforts to reform and expand the borders of those structures. Further, in solidarity, it is not enough to expand the fold of democratic participation, since there will always be subjects, as Derrida reminds us, who exist in alterity. Therefore, when Derrida argues that we must turn to alterity in thinking about the political, he proposes a model of political engagement rooted in the fluidity of strategic engagement. He argues, “political action is not empirical but constantly strategic” (180) and “every political questions implies an extremely complicated, constantly readjusted strategic analysis” (183). As such, we must consider how solidarity functions as a practice of strategic political action and as a framework that aligns us to others. How we think about alterity – how we think about the other – is therefore central to any understanding of solidarity in both a historic and contemporary context.

Solidarity’s origins in the Enlightenment help us to historicize the emergence of the modern subject as a political agent. In her work on colonial history, racial difference and the rise of European self-determination, Denise Ferreira da Silva (2007) argues that our notion of the sovereign subject – who is both an individual and self-determining – developed through the colonial project, which produced the modern subject through a new globality of human difference in contrast to the racial subject as other (xix). For da Silva, “it was only in the post-Enlightenment period, when reason finally displaced the divine ruler and author to become the sovereign ruler of man, that human difference became the product of a symbolic tool, the concept of the racial, deployed in projects to ‘discover’ the truth of man, which (trans)formed the
globe itself into a modern ontological context” (2). The origins of human difference and the origins of the modern political subject are therefore intertwined in the development of modernity. As the public sphere developed, early forms of solidarity served as a basis for interdependency (i.e. shared interest and collaboration) across modern subjects, with the rise of the bourgeoisie in late-18th century Europe. With the shifting structures of governance and the development of a public sphere, early forms of solidarity, articulated through the language of interdependency and fraternity, filled a role in the burgeoning of liberal democracy and civil society in the modern nation state. As da Silva’s work demonstrates, the discursive shift that shaped the modern European subject was commensurate with the project of colonial expansion. Thus, solidarity’s origins are tied to the dialectic relationship between the modern subject and his other.

Historicizing solidarity in the project of the Enlightenment and Europe’s colonial expansion is important if we are going to consider the risks of solidarity. From its inception, solidarity was neither innocent nor ethical; rather, it emerged out of the necessity of political alignments and attachments under new economies of governance rooted in the mobility of modern subjects into administrative power in the modern nation state. As such, solidarity can be understood as a technique of modern political agency rather than a quality of collectivity. Nevertheless, solidarity holds weight with social justice discourses because it profoundly speaks to a core principle of human subjectivity – that of attachment. Solidarity has always been accompanied the affiliations of friendship, love, kindness, empathy and compassion. I turn to these registers of attachment in order to understand the productive tension between political attachments and our identifications and affinities in social movement practices.

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70 The concept of solidarity emerged during the late 18th century. Although the term solidarity dates back to 1584, the etymology of the term’s use correlates to 1739-47 “se dit des personnes qui ont une communauté d'intérêts ou de responsabilités” (Centre National de Resources Textuelles et Lexicales. http://www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie/solidaire) – which roughly translates to people who have a community of interests or responsibilities.

71 The modern subject in the post-Enlightenment period was shaped by the European bourgeoisie of the 17th and 18th centuries, which gave rise to the first forms of modern revolution (e.g. the French Revolution). da Silva’s work on this history connects the newly formed subject of modernity to the development of scientific discourses of the human.

72 The modern subject was constituted by the racial, gendered and classed other. I use gendered pronouns here because this subject was, and to a large extent still is, a European male subject.
Textures of Attachment

How do we come to think of our attachments outside of the affiliations of kinship, family, and religion? When solidarity first entered the lexicon of 18th century Europe, it was tied to the shifting political discourses of the Enlightenment, most widely seen in the call to “liberty, equality, and fraternity” in the French and Haitian revolutions. The call for *fraternity*, not solidarity, points to a shift in the formation of modern political subjectivities from the late 18th century to the present. Fraternity – brotherhood, or “the state or quality of being fraternal or brotherly” – extends the language of familial relations to the public sphere, as fraternity binds men as brothers who are neither connected through ancestry nor kinship. Alain Badiou (2012) argues that fraternity “is related to the issue of differences, of their friendly co-presence within the political process” (63). Badiou’s remarks on the relationship between fraternity and difference are significant; if fraternity makes attachments possible because it makes difference a “friendly co-presence,” then fraternal forms of political attachment produce a particular kind of relationship to the political. I am interested in this tension between friendly co-presence and difference, because it seems that fraternity – and early articulates of solidarity – rely on a rhetoric of attachment that remains close to home (both figuratively and literally). In fraternity, we can connect across differences as long as these differences are friendly or familial.

Fraternity is a texture of attachment that corresponds to the intimacies of kinship, friendship, and the possibility of identifying with others. But fraternity is not quite friendship,

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73 Original French: “liberté, égalité, fraternité”

74 I owe many thanks to Melanie Newton for introducing me to a brief history of political attachments in the Haitian revolution.

75 I speculate that the popularization of *solidarity*, over the term *fraternity*, emerged through the development of political subjectivities in the decolonization and postcolonial period. This history, however, is beyond the scope of my current project. I hope to pursue research on the history of discourses of fraternity and solidarity in the French and Haitian revolutions and their connections to decolonizing movements of the 19th and 20th centuries in future work on solidarity and attachment.


77 In their work on kindness, Adam Phillips and Barbara Taylor (2009) argue that *fellow feeling* constitutes “our imaginative capacity to identify with other people” (54).
and its semantic limits do not give it the flexibility to stretch our capacity for identification across unfamiliar differences. The trouble with friendliness and fraternity is that it limits our identifications and attachments to the proximate or familiar. This poses a serious problem for our capacity for political attachment, not least because brotherhood and fraternity, in our contemporary context, are ripe with colonial and patriarchal nostalgia. More simply, fraternity was never going to be a good enough register of attachment for contemporary social movements, since by definition fraternity is formed through familiar attachments, through brotherly identifications. Solidarity, on the other hand, has persisted as the political attachment that defines contemporary social movement practices across the mid-20th to 21st century.

In part, solidarity has become meaningful because it attends to the possibility of attachment across the unfamiliar. The shifting geopolitical conditions of colonial and postcolonial migration and the globalization of capital radically altered human encounters with difference. We now live in an era confronted by constant engagement with differences: through the flow of global capital and commodities, economic and forced migrations, tourism, and transnational media, all of which make concepts like fraternity and brotherhood seem old fashioned and even parochial. For Derrida (2002), the problem of human difference provides the basis for his proposition to turn to friendship for seeking out the possibility of democracy to come. Looking back at his earlier work on friendship, he argues, “friendship is never a given in the present; it belongs to the experience of waiting, of promise, or of commitment. … at issue there is that which responsibility opens to the future” (1988, 636). Derrida proposes a radical new model for friendship, one based not in familial and brotherly identifications, but through the impossibility of fully knowing and identifying with others across differences. He suggests that our hope for political imagining requires an openness to the anticipation of attachment that is not familiar – for the possibility of friendship that is never really a given. Thus, the anticipatory potential of friendship opens us to attachments that are not yet friendly (to use Badiou’s definition of fraternity).

Distinguishing between fraternity, friendliness, and friendship may seem fastidious, but the movements across these concepts chart out an important shift in how we come to imagine the

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78 Fraternities are, after all, meant to ensure the legacy of the elite.
textures of political attachment that accompany solidarity. These are also important trajectories to trace because they open us to questions about the attending risks of our attachments. Can fraternity be an intelligible form of attachment under the persistent conditions of racial segregation? In the case of Palestine-Israel for instance, the call for friendly co-presence directed at Palestinians resisting colonization betrays the possibility of a political imaginary beyond hegemonic structures of the Israeli nation state. To call for friendliness elides the unintelligibility of difference shaping the subjectivities of Palestinians and Israelis. This means that if we want to imagine another possibility for attachment that might overcome difference, our political affinities need to be skeptical of friendliness, and instead turn more towards the anticipatory potential of what Derrida imagines in the possibility of friendship.

Badiou calls friendship an intellectual attachment, but he sees love as that which “embraces all the positive aspects of friendship but … relates to the totality of the being of the other” (2012, 36). Love takes hold of our political imaginary because it introduces the radical transgression and anticipation of the pleasures of difference, at the same time that it holds us vulnerable to the unintelligibility of the other. Like Derrida’s model of friendship that relies on openness towards the future and the other, love is a texture of attachment that offers us the promise of transformation. We cannot enter love without being radically transformed by our entanglements with the other. It is therefore unsurprising that love turns up as a recurring theme in critical scholarship on attachment and transformational politics. The turn to love seeks out the possibility of attachment that extends from the interpersonal to the field of the political, collectivizing the emotional registers of our attachments across difference.

For Badiou, the primary force of love is its ability to “slice diagonally through the most powerful oppositions and radical separations.” (29). Although he refers here to sexual difference (as in the binary sex/gender system), we can read his turn to the political in his defense of love. Badiou is not interested in the political extension of love per se, but the “secret resonance” between the intensity of the political and the intensity of love (75). He argues, if we want “to open ourselves up to difference and its implications, so the collective can become the whole

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79 This question is in part sparked by Sylvia Wynter’s work on the history of humanism and the trap of the socio-scientific subject in both racial histories of Black subjugation under the ontological order of difference and what she calls “the limits to the incorporation of Blacks into the normative order” (1984, 40).
world, then the defence of love becomes the point individuals have to practice” (98). hooks, turns to love for a similar proposal; she argues that an ethics of love involves “embracing a global vision wherein we see our lives and our fate as intimately connected to those of everyone else on the planet” (2000, 88). For hooks, the turn to love is at the root of our capacity for attachment and for the possibility of living with difference; she says, “the willingness to sacrifice is a necessary dimension of loving practice and living in community,” (142). Badiou and hooks turn to love to help think about the relationship between collectivity and attachment. If we are not only attached because of shared identification through culture, nationality, kinship, etc., then love holds our capacity for attachment beyond differences, by drawing the emotional registers of human interconnectivity into the space of political possibility. The implications of love for solidarity are clear here: love promises to bind us across difference and makes possible a better future. What other goal could solidarity hold, than to collectivize us across our differences and make cohabitation possible?

However, love is not without its attending risks. Like fraternity, love introduces our attachments to the realm of the familial. When we love, we make the other knowable to us, even if that knowing is a fiction. But what if we can’t love the other? What if the other is unknowable to us? What if our love turns to hate? Love is a risky endeavor in even the best of circumstances, and as much as love promises transformation, it is also wrapped up in hegemonies of social organization. For instance, love makes the modern family. Gay marriage discourses illustrate that our right to love is predicated on the introduction of new norms of attachment to the dominant social order, rather than the radical transformation of our familial attachments. \footnote{Elizabeth Povinelli (2006) warns that love “secures the self-evident good of social institutions, social distributions of life and death, and social responsibilities for these institutions and distributions” (17). As such, love is simultaneously at risk of re-inscribing power asymmetries as it is a capable of radically transforming our attachments and intimacies.}

Friendship and love clearly attend to the registers of attachment along the lines of social orientation and intimate investments, and as such, these registers contribute to the texture of

\footnote{Lisa Duggan’s (2002) work on homonormativity argues that gay marriage discourses contribute to the individualization and privatization of rights.}
solidarity as a mode of attachment. As Wendy Brown suggests in interview, if we are to love again, “the ‘we’ that loves again will be a different ‘we’ than the one we are” (2006, 32). For Brown, the turn to love requires a transformation of the self, a possible future that must be different from our present for political imagining; for Derrida, this is democracy to come, for Brown, it is radical democracy. To be transformed by our attachments suggests that the relationship between the self and others is not simply one-directional but co-constitutive of human subjectivity. In their work on kindness, Phillips and Taylor point out that in pre-modern history up until the early Enlightenment, “kindness had been treated as the solution to a problem: the problem of other people” (2009, 28). During the Enlightenment, a new account of kindness emerged, embedded in the connection between self and other. They argue that by involving ourselves with strangers, we become open to the unpredictable consequences of being changed by the act of kindness. For Phillips and Taylor, “real kindness changes people in the doing of it, often in unpredictable ways. Real kindness is an exchange with essentially unpredictable consequences. It is a risk precisely because it mingles our needs and desires with the needs and desires of others” (12).

Like love, kindness offers us the anticipation and hope for transformation; yet it differs from love because it remains open to the unpredictable risk of our attachments. Whereas love aims to bind our attachments and overcome our differences so that the other becomes familial and intelligible to us, kindness holds no promise that our entanglements will make us familiar. Love and kindness are textures of attachment that attend to our emotional capacity to connect to others. Looking at these registers of attachment, we can begin to trace the attending risks and motivations that guide our political attachments. Love and kindness, which not coincidentally is the cornerstone of one form of Buddhist meditation (loving-kindness), hint at the complex web of emotional and affective ties that bind us politically. But what happens in the space in between the political project of solidarity and its attachments in the realm of emotion and affect? Brown asks, “how is one able to remain attached to whatever political aims we might have, while giving those attachments a contingent, partial character, and recognizing that the very human beings at stake in these projects, who are either injured or potentially emancipated by those projects, might be seen differently, might be grasped differently, might be articulated differently” (2006, 27)?

Carolyn Pedwell’s work on the transnational politics of empathy puts Brown’s question to the task. Pedwell (2012) is interested in how the practices of empathy are embedded in
neoliberal governmentality through the asymmetrical relations between subjects and objects. Her work considers a critical approach to empathy by looking at “empathy’s uneven effects” (165). Pedwell wants to rethink the assumed goodness of empathy by taking into account “empathy’s uneven nature and effects - how ‘empathetic’ self-transformation can (re)constitute unequal affective subjects and relations of power” (175). Pedwell warns that not attending to these hierarchies risks obscuring how transnational circuits of power constitute subjects differently. Pedwell’s critique of empathy within the structures of neoliberal governmentality (174) returns us to the central problem in theorizing solidarity. Insofar as empathy can be made complicit in the very projects empathetic extension and attachment aim to resist (e.g. war), we cannot assume that the qualities of attachment that accompany solidarity are substantive for the political. At the same time, we risk valorizing solidarity when we separate this form of political attachment from the textures of emotional attachments that accompany it. We can neither celebrate friendship, love, kindness, empathy and solidarity, nor can we dismiss these textures as meaningless for our capacity for transformation.

Returning to my Cope Pink story, I can trace my desire for solidarity in the moment of failure between the extension of empathy in the report back and my own anticipations of attachment to doing good. Our capacities for transformation are entangled in the complex attachments that underlie our gestures, which are already at risk of compromising solidarity at the same time that they make solidarity possible. My desire that the report back should have engendered an effect of political action assumed that the witnessing and retelling of the story was not already structured through the asymmetries that make such an effect difficult. Lauren Berlant argues that sentiments of compassion are not simply false; they “derive from social training, emerge at historical moments, are shaped by aesthetic conventions, and take place in scenes that are anxious, volatile, surprising, and contradictory” (2004, 7). So how can we translate a story of witnessing into a call to action without also contending with our attachments to our own anxieties, sufferings, and desires for goodness? This is not to say that the textures of attachment that accompany solidarity, such as friendship, love, kindness, empathy and compassion will necessarily reproduce hierarchies; rather, I am proposing that our affective attachments are simultaneously necessary for political solidarity and at risk of serving hegemonic orders. Our goal then, should be not to remove risk, but to remain attentive to the slippages that affective technologies of attachment pose for the political.
Solidarity Now

What we might need to give now, or what we might need to inhabit now, is that founding openness to possibility, to seeing the world differently, to seeing power differently, to seeing the future differently. This involves a brave and humble intellectual and political openness. It also means refusing the dichotomy between the local and the global, the national and the transnational, the intellectual and the practical... I actually think that it’s the only way through or out of the melancholy that has to do with the lost objects and attachments of the left and the despair for the possibility of change.

— Wendy Brown

If we separate solidarity from the messy and precarious conditions of human relationality, we risk losing sight of how our political attachments are also enmeshed in our emotional and psychic attachments. Despite our best intentions, we cannot trust that solidarity will necessarily lead us to its transformational promise, since it cannot shield us from the surrounding discursive and ideological influences of the social order that structures daily life. As Pedwell argues, there is no way to stand outside of neoliberal governmentality (174). At the same time, Phillips and Taylor warn, “the terror of kindness is that it makes us too immediately aware of our own and other people’s vulnerabilities” (11). Perhaps this is one reason why we idealize solidarity, friendship, love, kindness, empathy and compassion – to compensate for the risk of experiencing vulnerability. Because attachments are always a risky business – they fail, betray, and can make us stubborn – our investments in solidarity can serve both transformative and hegemonic interests. Solidarity exists in tension with other textures of attachment, and although it is similar in its capacity to bind us to one another, it is also unique for its capacity to offer us a distinctly political approach to working through our attachments.

Solidarity holds deep meaning for collective struggles, but also acts as a placeholder for the unreconciled problem of difference in activist cultures, and it stands in for the impossible limits of interdependency in a globalized and neoliberal context. More than simply a model for activist strategizing, solidarity holds substantive value for imagining change, especially as social movements expand transnationally. In the gap between our political intentions and psychic attachments, solidarity is performing a key function that allows us to sustain our political imaginings in the space of the transnational. It is not enough to simply identify with the other, to love the other, or show compassion for the other as a basis for building solidarity. Indeed, if we assume that the emotional textures of attachment are enough to fuel our transformational hopes,
then we already begin failing the projects of social change – because we fail to see the embedded risk in all forms of attachment, not only in solidarity.

Solidarity overlaps with its affiliated textures of attachment, however it also exceeds the boundaries of the emotional registers of friendship, love, kindness, empathy and compassion, as we wed the individual to collective interests in political attachment. Solidarity requires us to abandon some of our interests in favour of those attachments that fuel collective struggles. For instance, queer solidarity activists in Canada may need to abandon their political attachments to “out” visibility in the development of transnational networks of solidarity with Palestinian activists in the queer Palestine movement, a topic I will return to in more depth later in this project. If we assume that our political attachments are analogous to our psychic and emotional attachments, then we risk favouring our individual interests over the strategic and collective interests of social movements. Perhaps worse, though, is that if we naturalize our attachments, we fail to see how they are embedded within the discursive and ideological structures shaping our social, political and psychic lives. If we hope to sustain political attachments, then we must consider how our attachments can betray our intentions to contribute to solidarity.

What happens when our attachments fail our intentions of solidarity? I want to examine a case where attachment to critical standpoints threatened to undermine the capacity of the queer Palestine solidarity movement, despite the good intentions behind the interventions of all parties. In 2012, US-based solidarity efforts in the queer Palestine movement were called into question when an online debate on Jadaliyya81 ensued between academic and Palestine solidarity activists Jasbir Puar and Maya Mikdashi, and Haneen Maikey and Heike Schotten over the implications of anti-pinkwashing activism. On August 9, 2012 Puar and Mikdashi, published a critique of US and European-based Palestine solidarity activism, which they argued replicated the conditions of homonationalism and settler colonialism in the anti-pinkwashing, or what they called pinkwatching,82 movement. Puar and Mikdashi argued, “the practice and normalization of settler

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81 Jadaliyya is an independent ezine produced by ASI (Arab Studies Institute), the umbrella organization that produces Arab Studies Journal, Tadween Publishing, FAMA, and Quilting Point. http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/about

82 The term pinkwatching is used here to describe activism that monitors and critiques the Israeli state’s use of pinkwashing practices. It is worth noting that although Puar and Mikdashi name these North American and
colonialism operate as the staging ground for both pinkwashing in Israel and pinkwatching in the United States…. a myopic focus on Israeli pinkwashing sacrifices a deeper understanding and critique of the ways in which the war on terror, Islamophobia, and rights discourses are intertwined.” Their critique, which aimed to reveal the connection between Western sexual exceptionalism and the homonational practices of the Israeli state, almost instantly threw activists based in Europe and North America working within the queer Palestine movement into a crisis over their solidarity. Puar and Mikdashi’s critique was meant as a provocation to turn a self-critiquing eye on a movement rapidly gaining momentum within the United States; but their conclusion, “that both pinkwashing and pinkwatching speak the language of homonationalism,” functioned to destabilize a movement that was only just beginning to develop a network and basis for transnational solidarity. Indeed, their critique came only a few months before the first international gathering of queer activists that was planned for the World Social Forum (WSF) in November of that year, and the implications of their critique put this gathering into question.

Against the backdrop of an upcoming attempt to generate a cohesive transnational movement of activists working on anti-pinkwashing and Palestine solidarity activism, Puar and Mikdashi’s critique couldn’t have come at a worse time. In Toronto and on international listserves, I witnessed and participated in countless discussions about whether it was even ethical for Western-based activists to continue working on anti-pinkwashing organizing if our work served to reinforce homonationalism – the very function our efforts aimed to contest. Puar and Mikdashi were certainly not incorrect when they argued that discourses of pinkwashing and anti-pinkwashing/pinkwatching are constituted within the parameters of homonationalism. However,

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European-based activists as pinkwatchers, this term is not used elsewhere. It is likely that the authors selected this term because of its use on the anti-pinkwashing website, www.pinkwatchingisrael.com. However, Pinkwatching Israel is a collaboration of Arab activists and PQ BDS, not European or North American activists, as Puar and Mikdashi’s article implies.


84 Although Puar and Mikdashi’s critique was directed at the US context, Canadian activists within the movement read the critique as largely applicable to the Canadian context as well, which shares a similar history of colonialism.
the general audience of their critique had neither the capacity nor the support to contend with the consequences of their claim. Were anti-pinkwashing activists and the Israeli state’s pinkwashing tactics inherently the same, or was there a way of recuperating Western solidarity while still maintaining the critique of Israeli state practices? This question remained unclear in their original article.

I do not want to suggest that Puar and Mikdashi should not have issued their critique; rather, I want to use this crisis as a way of thinking about the vulnerability of solidarities and the range of risk embedded in its practices. Although critiques of the discursive practices of social movements are important contributions to movement development, the ambiguity of Puar and Mikdashi’s critique offered little foothold for an emergent movement without central leadership or basis of unity. Rather than fuelling necessary self-reflection, their intervention risked unravelling the early momentum of the transnational movement. In a context structured by what Mohanty (2013) refers to as the general fragmentation of collective struggles caused by neoliberalization, which have undermined left movements since the 1980s, their critique was interpreted as a condemnation rather than a conversation. This is partially because the landscape of neoliberal individualism flattens the textured conditions that shape the geopolitical contexts of diverse actors in social movements. To equate the practices of a nation state with the resistant discourses of a decentralized and shifting social movement inadvertently reinforced this flattening effect. As true as their critique was, the impact of the publication had substantive consequences on the movement.

Two months later, on October 10th, Jadaliyya published a response from Maikey and Schotten, along with a rejoinder by Puar and Mikdashi. Maikey and Schotten critiqued Puar and Mikdashi’s original piece for being overly generalized, particularly in failing to frame the role of Palestinian activists in the transnational anti-pinkwashing movement. They further critiqued Puar and Mikdashi’s refusal to offer examples to illuminate and validate their claims. Puar and Mikdashi’s critique, they charged, appeared to homogenize the movement: “we worry that a set of straw caricatures is being erected, and entreat the authors to specify in greater detail to what
Although Puar and Mikdashi’s critique was clearly intended as a contribution to movement practices, it also emerged in a context structured by neoliberal ideologies that frame our very capacities to read and interpret their text. In a highly individualized context, their critique appeared to condemn all solidarity activists as homologous in reinforcing settler colonialism and US imperialism.

Maikey and Schotten’s rejoinder came as an attempt to reinstall the parameters of solidarity for Western activists in light of the immobilizing critique. Their assertion, that antipinkwashing organizing was not simply another site of Western imperialism, made an important intervention that aimed to recuperate the potential for transnational solidarity. In their response, Puar and Mikdashi expressed agreement with many of the critiques offered by Maikey and Schotten, and clarified their intention: “a more accurate read of our argument … is that we were mapping out the relations between pinkwashing and homonationalism, or more precisely, the global conditions of homonationalism that make a practice such as Israeli pinkwashing possible and legible in the first place.”

Although the crisis had mostly faded into the background by the time transnational activists gathered at the WSF the following month, the disconnect between the intention of Puar and Mikdashi’s critique and the accompanying responses created a moment of political unintelligibility. Despite the intentions of all parties to contribute critically to the politically pressing concerns over movement practices, the Jadaliyya debates over antipinkwashing activism destabilized the parameters of solidarity without generating a framework where activist attachments could be renegotiated. These debates therefore pulled at the string of every activist’s vulnerability – that they might actually be doing something bad in their attempts to do good.

What kinds of attachments make solidarity possible and what kinds of attachments destabilize solidarity? I am interested in the Jadaliyya debate because it reveals how attachments place our solidarities at risk. To be clear, I am not critiquing Puar and Mikdashi’s important

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intervention into the conditions of solidarity and its relationship to homonationalism. Indeed, my next chapter takes up the parameters of this concern. However, I am interested in what happens to social movements when they are confronted with competing attachments. If solidarity activists are primarily attached to the project of doing good, and academics are primarily attached to the project of critique and analysis, to frame it in overly simplified terms, how can the doings of activists and the critiques of activist practice be reconciled in social movements? Further, if we are debating the practices of solidarity activism within the context of neoliberalism, how might these conflicts also be structured by the larger ideological influences on our capacities to interpret and read the critique?\(^{87}\)

Six months later, another gathering happened, this time amassing international academics and activists in New York at the Homonationalism and Pinkwashing conference.\(^{88}\) By this time, Puar and Mikdashi’s critique had circulated widely, and the conference included a number of panels on the conditions of homonationalism contextualized in North American settler-colonialism.\(^{89}\) The concerns Puar and Mikdashi raised were clearly important interventions in movement politics, which resonated in the panels devoted to the topic. Reflecting on the crisis in solidarity that ensued following the Jadaliyya debates, and the growth of work done following the debates on the question of homonationalism, we need to keep in mind that our interventions, regardless of intention, are wrapped up in the competing interests of our attachments. To consider solidarity meaningfully, we need to approach our interventions and our solidarities with the question of risk in mind. This might mean thinking strategically about our tactics for critique, it might also mean suspending our attachments to being good and doing good.

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\(^{87}\) I am afraid that these questions have no clear answer, but I pose them in with the intention of self-reflection and in the hopes of drawing forward the relationship between our attachments and neoliberal ideologies later on in this project.

\(^{88}\) Organized at the City University New York, Graduate Center, the Homonationalism and Pinkwashing conference, April 10-11, 2013 was the first academic venue to feature these topics. Both Maikey and Puar were invited keynote speakers.

\(^{89}\) Panels include “Queer Discourse of the Canadian Colonial Settler State” and “The Queer Settler” (Homonationalism and Pinkwashing Conference, Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies, City University New York, New York, April 10-12, 2013).
Thinking first about the role of risk in our solidarities can help us to assess where our attachments lie and what effect our attachments have on our transformative practices. Attentiveness to risk, to the vulnerability of attachment and the normalizing discourses of neoliberalism is a radically different way of approaching solidarity. Rather than celebrate solidarity, what would happen if we approached our political attachments as though they were already in the realm of risk? Not to make us afraid of failing at activism, but to acknowledge that risk is already embedded in our actions and desires by virtue of living in a world structured asymmetrically. If we cannot escape attachments, if democracy\(^\text{90}\) will always be an anticipation or horizon that we look towards rather than achieve, then why not mobilize them in the service of our political imaginings?

\(^{90}\text{I use democracy here in reference to Derrida’s proposal of democracy to come, and Brown’s proposal for radical democracy, but I could equally replace the word democracy here with “justice,” “symmetry,” “equality.”}\)
Chapter 2

The Risk of Difference: Transnational Feminism, Queer Solidarity, and the Trouble with Attachments

Solidarity is an attachment that, in its essence, wrestles with the problem of difference. How we connect to others across competing identifications and attachments is at the root of all practices of solidarity. In the previous chapter, I examined how solidarity emerged historically and discursively in conjunction with a textured matrix of attachments that accompanied its development as a political practice. By demonstrating solidarity’s entanglements with friendship, love, kindness, empathy and compassion, I proposed that a better way of thinking about solidarity is to turn to its textures of attachment in order to attend to the possibilities and risks of practicing solidarity. No other field has wrestled with the question of difference in solidarity as extensively as transnational feminism. In part, this is because the field of transnational feminism developed out of concern over the problem of difference and solidarity in feminist theory and activism. Transnational feminism also happened to be my own entry point into solidarity. As a young scholar and activist, it was transnational feminist thinkers such as Angela Davis, Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, Marnia Lazreg, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, and Chela Sandoval, among others, who structured my orientations to political attachments. Although I had grappled with identity attachments early on, it was the call for solidarity in transnational feminist theory that captivated my political imaginary.

As I began organizing through the platform of queer anti-war and anti-occupation activism, I also began to ask myself what it meant to call this work queer solidarity? Although the calls for solidarity that inspired me in transnational feminist texts compelled me to believe that solidarity was a crucial part of feminist practice, I remained unsatisfied with my own quick attachments to solidarity politics. This uneasiness had partially to do with my own uncertainties about what motivated my solidarity. Was it my shared identity with queer Arabs that guided me

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91 I began organizing in 2006 in solidarity with queer activists during the Lebanon War, and then starting in 2008 with queer Palestine solidarity activism.
to solidarity activism? Was it my desire to do good and to be a good person? The answer to both of these questions is admittedly yes, but there was also a third force driving my solidarity that tackled the question of identification more complexly. Queer solidarity did not just capture my desire to identify, it also captured my desire for a framework that would, at least in part, free me from my attachments to my own identity. Exhausted by the irreconcilable differences of my identifications and attachments to Arab and Jewish communities, queer solidarity offered me a way into the politics of the Middle East that did not reduce my role to my own identity.

Queer solidarity interests me because queerness’s orientations shift our methods for thinking about solidarity across difference; not because I think we should queer solidarity, to make solidarity something outside of the normative or something that belongs to queer people. This is a proposal that I could not have articulated without a substantive engagement with transnational feminist theory and politics, particularly as this body of work has grappled with the problem of identity and difference. Indeed, my argument in this chapter is that queer solidarity is only able to approach a meaningful conversation about the problem of difference because of the influence of transnational feminist thinking on this very question. However, my interest in queer solidarity is also a point of entry for thinking about the trouble of our attachments, the risks that accompany difference, and the terms through which solidarity is articulated in transnational movements.

The problem of difference, and solidarity across difference more explicitly, has far reaching implications for social movement building. As discussed in the previous chapter, the move towards solidarity as the primary form of political attachment for 20th and 21st century social movements came about through a shift in both the ideological and discursive framings of political attachments and the geopolitical makeup of globalized and multicultural societies. As the postmodern period introduced plurality and difference into the lexicon of political subjectivities – through multicultural, third world, and multiple subjugated identities92 – the turn to articulations of solidarity became necessary for us to imagine the possibility of political futures under the conditions of systemic asymmetry. Following the critiques of humanism and

92 I am referring to the introduction of postmodern models of the subject rooted in multiple identities along the parameters of gender, race, class, etc. For instance, we have here the introduction of the additive model of feminist identity, whereby a woman could be doubly oppressed by her gender and her race.
universalism that framed social thought from the Enlightenment to the early 20th century, this new era of political subjectivity was rooted squarely in the terrain of difference. The problem of the political was no longer captured in the call for the universal, but rather in the trouble with difference, whether these differences are based on identity, economics, geopolitics, or otherwise.

Feminist solidarity coming out of the women’s liberation movements of the 1960s and 70s was one of the key sites where the crisis over difference came to a head. Challenged by working class, third world and women of colour critiques of the universalization of the category woman – especially in the form of calls for global sisterhood – the coherence of a feminist politic began to be replaced by a turn to feminist politics centering on difference, plurality and the multiplicity of identities. Transnational feminist theory and politics emerged in part through an attempt to both address the problem of difference and propose new grounds for solidarity across difference. However, despite efforts to overcome the fracturing of feminist solidarity in the critique of universal womanhood, the problem of difference remains a central challenge for transnational feminist practices of solidarity. In transnational social movements, we find persistent fragmentation and debates over the leadership and composition of feminist activism and the pervasive problem of social asymmetries reflected in the hierarchies of feminist political struggles. The introduction of transnational feminist frameworks for modeling solidarity certainly reshaped feminist politics by introducing intersectional approaches to feminist social movements; however, the problem of difference has persisted in spite of the attempts that transnational feminist thinking has made to render solidarity more representative of differences.

Alternatives models for feminist solidarity, such as South-South, Third World and Two-Thirds World, which have been proposed by transnational feminist theorists, have expanded the horizon for thinking about what solidarity across difference might look like, however many of the same challenges remain. Who are the proper subjects of feminist solidarity? How do movements overcome power asymmetries in a global context? How do we address the continued fracturing and fragmentation of transnational movements? These are the practical questions that continue to be posed in transnational feminist texts, at international gatherings and across the diverse landscapes of local feminist movements. Most visibly in contemporary feminist politics, we find these questions in debates about the place of transsexual women in feminist movements, in abolitionist versus sex worker rights frameworks, and the role of religion, culture and tradition in feminist movements. These questions have no easy answers, nor do I wish to attempt an
answer for these questions, because in many ways, the problem of difference is not something we can ever overcome. Instead, I want to think of difference as a site of risk, as the terrain through which our textured attachments create trouble and possibility. Thinking about the risk of difference introduces us to another set of questions about our solidarities. Turning to my research on transnational queer solidarity activism in the Palestine movement, this chapter charts the discursive shifts in transnational feminist models of solidarity and challenges the way we interpret difference through queer solidarities. I contend that the crisis of difference in solidarity can be mitigated by the ambivalent orientation of queerness to the question of the subject.

I begin this chapter by looking comparatively at the emergence of the queer Palestine solidarity movement in the early 21st century and the work within transnational feminist thought that has grappled with the question of solidarity. I then consider the problem of difference in transnational solidarity, outlining some of the key challenges that poststructural feminist critiques of the subject pose for transnational feminist solidarity, and examine how theories of deconstruction might attend to the problems raised by postmodern pluralism in feminist solidarity. I end the chapter by tracing queer emergences in both theories of the subject and in the formation of queer transnational solidarities in the Palestine solidarity movement to suggest a new set of discursive tools for articulating solidarity through the risk of difference.

Transnational Solidarity: Queer Palestine Solidarity and Transnational Feminism

The queer Palestine movement was born out of the transnational alignments of anti-war and decolonization solidarities foregrounding Palestine liberation, and crystalized in contemporary queer critiques of neoliberal state cooptions of sexual rights. This emergent social movement steadily gained momentum following the 2001 formation of the first distinctly queer Palestine-focused groups: the Black Laundry aka Kvisa Shchora in Tel Aviv and QUIT (Queers

93 My aim here is not to offer a survey of the entire field of transnational feminism, rather I will introduce the field briefly and focus on the way that solidarity has been taken up by transnational feminist scholars and the limits of solidarity in transnational feminist practice. To be clear, although the two are connected and in conversation with one another, I am arguing that there is a separation between the theorizing of transnational feminist solidarity and the practices of transnational feminist activists.
Undermining Israeli Terrorism) in San Francisco.94 Within 10 years, queer organizations had formed in Palestine, with queer Palestinian groups such as ASWAT (2002) and alQaws (2006), and solidarity focused groups like PQBDS95 (2010) and Pinkwatching Israel (2011). Internationally, groups proliferating between 2008 and 2014, starting with Queers Against Israeli Apartheid Toronto (2008) and the establishment of autonomous and independent QuAIA groups in other cities.96 In 2012, however, the movement coalesced when a network of groups and individuals met under the banner “Queer Visions at the World Social Forum: Free Palestine” in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The first gathering of its kind, the Queer Visions meeting helped generate support for transnational initiatives and campaigns that such as the Boycott Gay Tourism to Israel campaign (Figure 2), campaigns on the Pinkwatching Israel website and queer cultural boycotts, such as the campaign against the partnership between Frameline, the San Francisco International LGBT Film Festival, and the Israeli Consulate.97

Figure 2: Photo of Boycott Gay Tourism campaign at Toronto Pride Parade, June 2013 (Photo by author)

94 See Appendix 2 for a timeline of the queer Palestine movement.
95 Palestinian Queers for Boycott Divestment and Sanctions
96 QuAIA groups formed in Vancouver (2010), Edmonton (2010), New York (2011), Halifax (2012), and Seattle (2013), and Auckland (2014). Additionally, other groups formed under new banners, such as No to Pinkwashing in the UK that formed in 2012.
The groups involved in the queer Palestine movement predominantly fall under three general categories: those dedicated exclusively to Palestine solidarity activism, groups working on Palestine solidarity among a series of other queer solidarities, and Palestinian-based groups working on a range of locally-based support work, transnational solidarity building, and anti-colonial mobilizing. The diversity of groups within the queer Palestine movement thus reflects the historic and discursive lineages of multiple solidarities across anti-colonial projects, Palestine liberation, queer activism and transnational feminisms. Further, these groups all situate their solidarities in proximity to the larger Palestine solidarity movement, particularly in the connection between queer resistance and decolonization. For instance, PQBDS – one of the central Palestinian-based groups focused on transnational solidarity – articulates their role within the larger decolonizing efforts of the Palestinian liberation movement. On their website, they state, “our main struggle is one against Israel’s colonization, occupation and apartheid; a system that has oppressed us for the past 63 years.” PQBDS’s statement thus situates the queer movement within the realm of postcolonial politics, shared across queer and non-queer interventions, and connecting to the larger Palestine liberation movement, particularly through the call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions.

Although the queer movement shares a decolonizing project with the larger Palestine liberation and solidarity movement, what distinguishes it is the mobilization of a new type of political intervention, one that foregrounds the global effects of neoliberal rights discourses, particularly sexual rights, on the project of decolonization. Neoliberal discourses of sexual rights are mobilized through the emergent practice of homonationalism in the bolstering of the Western nation state as exceptional. In the case of Palestine/Israel, we see over the last decade a shift in

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98 For example, QUIT (San Francisco), QuAIA-Toronto, QuAIA-New York, QuAIA-Vancouver, QuAIA-Seattle, No to Pinkwashing (UK)

99 Groups that have taken on projects supporting the queer Palestine movement include, but are not limited to, Queeristan (Amsterdam), Nasawiya and Meem (Lebanon), and Q-Team & Pervers/cité (Montreal).

100 ASWAT (Haifa), alQaws (Jerusalem), and PQBDS


102 I introduce this critique in the introduction but will develop the argument on homonationalism in greater detail in Chapter 3.
Israeli state discourses that generate a key site of contestation for emergent queer solidarities. Whereas traditional forms of Israeli state discourse focus on nationalism, state security, and national defense by upholding Israel’s military tactics, counter-terrorism, ethnic-nationalism and border security (e.g. Israel must be able to defend itself against Hamas), the shift in neoliberal discourses under homonationalism introduce a new set of conditions for the Israeli state through the language of sexual rights (e.g. Israel must be able to defend itself because it is the only safe place for gays in the Middle East; Tel Aviv is a gay oasis in the Middle East). The shift here is one that moves from the power of the nation state’s military colonial project, towards an increasing focus on the nation state’s deployment of discursive practices that speak to the narratives coherent within neoliberal values of liberal-democracy, including: consumer rights, individual rights, and free market.

Broader transnational solidarity in the Palestine movement predominantly relies on a critique of state practices and structures in the call for decolonization. These groups generally organize their efforts on the economic, legal, infrastructural and military forms of colonial power, particularly as they affect the daily lives of Palestinians. Among them, prominent groups such as the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), and numerous chapters of Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW), the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA), the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, the Palestine Solidarity Network, and campus-based groups such as Students for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR), to name a few, focus their efforts on revealing the colonial practices of the Israeli state, representing Palestinian voices and experiences, and supplying international observer and witnessing programs in the West Bank and Gaza. Queer transnational solidarity activism shares these critiques, but mobilizes a different set of discursive practices in the call for decolonization and the expansion of transnational solidarity with Palestine. This is accomplished through the combined gestures of anti-colonial solidarity and neoliberal critique, which do not focus exclusively on the call for liberation from the colonial state. To be precise, these groups do call for liberation, but center their actions on public critique of state cooption of rights discourses and the influence of neoliberal logics on discourses of human rights and state violence. Further, they intervene by calling for multidimensional...
platforms for liberation while remaining critical of the geopolitical conditions of globalization and neoliberalism, maintaining a degree of ambivalence over the celebration of ethnic nationalism while remaining committed to the project of national liberation.

The focus on colonial, patriarchal and heteronormative constraints through the call for gender, sexuality and bodily rights of the transnational queer solidarity movement is indebted to the interventions of intersectional and transnational feminist politics. Transnational feminism, a field concomitant to postcolonial and anti-racist feminist critiques, follows the shift in economic, social and political flows under the conditions of late capitalism and globalization, commonly referred to as the post-modern period. This period is marked by a radical break in the coherence of the subject and the challenge of articulating oppositional politics in an era structured by fragmentation. For instance, postmodern critiques of gender destabilized the gender binary system, challenging the biological determinist roots of gender difference and critiquing the universalization of gender as a category of both gendered subjectivity and political struggle. Here, we find the rise of the theories examining the social construction of gender and the proliferation of distinct identity-based feminisms, such as Black feminism, Lesbian feminism, Chicana feminism, Indigenous feminism, etc.

However, within the proliferation of difference that followed the shift towards multiple and plural identities, feminist politics faced a crisis in the foundational premise of feminist solidarity – that women shared the same oppression. Here, the problem of universalization mirrored the power asymmetries that prioritized race and class based hegemonic interests. Following postmodern critiques, however, risked fragmenting the coherence of social movements, which rely on broad based attachments for articulating and mobilizing resistance. The challenge of postmodern fragmentation for social movements and political subjectivities comes down to the problem of social difference and social hierarchies across identity categories. Transnational feminism emerged out of these critiques of difference and aimed to reconcile the challenge of difference by rehabilitating a model of feminist politics rooted in solidarity.

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104 See Chela Sandoval’s (2000) work for more on the postmodern subject in feminist politics.

105 This is not to say that different identity-based stakeholders did not exist prior to the rise of postmodern thinking; rather, they coalesced during this period through new discourses in political thought that turned to the site of difference for reinterpreting the human, beginning in the 1960s and fully forming in the 1980s.
Early feminist articulations of difference emerged through critiques of the women’s liberation movements of the 1960s and 70s, and advanced by U.S. Black feminist interventions in the 1970s and early 80s, such as Barbara Smith’s 1983 compilation, *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* and the Combahee River Collective’s 1977 statement. These and other postmodern feminist critiques largely centered on the failures of feminist solidarity of the women’s liberation and civil rights era, which posited a universal experience of global sisterhood under the shared conditions of patriarchy. Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (1994) identify the feminist investment in modernity as the core problem in feminist articulations of resistance of that era, since the project of modernity was primarily a project of Western colonial expansion and hegemony (2). Feminist critics of modernity and the global sisterhood model of feminism challenged the marginalization of racialized women both within the movement and in the way feminist liberation was imagined. In her work on sisterhood and feminist solidarity, hooks (1986) argues that the divisions produced through models of feminism rooted in victimization fracture the political possibility of feminist solidarity (130), and that the “splintering into different political factions and special-interest groups has erected unnecessary barriers to Sisterhood” (137). Instead, hooks argues for a model of feminist solidarity rooted in difference, where “when women come together, rather than pretend union, we would acknowledge that we are divided and must develop strategies to overcome fears, prejudices, resentments, competitiveness, etc” (137).

The form of feminist solidarity that universal or global sisterhood was predicated on presented “a cross-culturally singular, homogenous group with the same interests, perspectives, and goals and similar experiences” (Mohanty 2003, 110). As such, calls for new models of feminist collectivity required the integration of postmodern critiques. Critiques of global sisterhood were indicative of a larger shift in thought that emerged throughout the postmodern era, which saw a shift away from the project of modernity and increasingly turned to questions of difference, fragmentation and plurality, where the subject was deconstructed in a shift towards multiplicity and difference (Butler 1992). For Grewal and Kaplan, postmodern critique marked the introduction of a set of tools for analyzing “the way that a culture of modernity is produced in

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106 The Combahee River Collective (1977), in their statement on contemporary Black feminism, was one of the first published instances of a feminist critique of difference, whereby the fragmented subjectivities of Black feminists and lesbians were articulated as the grounds for new political frameworks rooted in inclusiveness of diverse locations across race, class, gender and sexuality.
diverse locations” (5), and as such, transnational feminism provided a framework for articulating multiple perspectives across asymmetrical relations and affiliations (Kaplan 1994, 139).

Transnational feminist thinkers, such as bell hooks (1984, 1986), Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), Chela Sandoval (2000), Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (2001), and Chandra Mohanty (2003), articulated new approaches to feminist politics following postmodern critique. As a field, transnational feminism combines feminist politics across postcolonial, anti-racist, third world, and women of colour feminisms to critical race theory (Hill Collins 2000; Razack 2008; Thobani 2007), political economy and historical materialism (Bannerji 1995; Agathangelou 2008), and human rights movements (Ferree & Tripp 2006); it is also most commonly associated with the emergence of concepts such as intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991) and the advancement of coalitional politics in feminism (Reagon 1983; Kaplan 1994; Mohanty 2003). Across these fields, a large segment of transnational feminist thought has centered on an attempt to reconcile the problem of feminist solidarity by grappling with the question of how to attend to the problem of difference without abandoning the desire for collectivity under the increasingly fractionalized conditions of the postmodern era.

Postmodern critiques of the universal liberal subject of modernity set the terms for feminist critiques of the subject and feminist solidarity, and opened new approaches to thinking about solidarity and oppositional politics. In her work on U.S. third world feminism, Chela Sandoval (2000) argues that the conditions of postmodern globalization marked a shift in thought away from Western forms of rationality, and saw the development of new forms of oppositional politics within marginalized communities in the West (9). Thus, the shifts in economic and social organization of the postmodern period, most notably represented by the move towards globalization, coincided with a shift in thought within critical frameworks, such as feminism, that began to rearticulate how we think about the subject. The shift in feminist thinking around the subject offered a solution to the problem of postmodern fragmentation, one that Sandoval argues was constituted by the already fragmented subjectivities of the marginalized.

In her critique of Fredric Jameson’s lamentation over ‘the death of the subject,’ which marks a paradox for the possibility of a coherent subject and oppositional politics in the era of late globalized capitalism, Sandoval argues that we should turn to a third view of the subject to understand oppositional politics in the postmodern period. This third view is rooted in “the
fragmentation or split subjectivity of subjection” (33), whereby the already fragmented subjectivities of “U.S. third world feminism, subaltern, queer, and de-colonial” forms of resistance mark a differential form of consciousness (34). Consequently, as postmodern, postcolonial, anti-racist and third world feminist critiques challenged the modernist premises of feminist solidarity in narratives of global sisterhood, which were predicated on a hegemonic model of a white middle-class Western subject, transnational feminist models of feminist solidarity emerged through the re-articulation of feminist solidarity rooted in difference.

Rather than abandoning the project of feminist solidarity, transnational feminism has attempted to reconcile the problem of difference by turning to the framework of postmodern critique. The problem of postmodern fragmentation became the foundation of new solidarities, whereby the terms of solidarity were no longer based on the coherent universal subject, but on the multiplicity of subjects and subjectivities across feminisms. This new model of feminist solidarity is distinctly postmodern, as it articulates a version of solidarity across difference; a model of solidarity rooted in difference that marks a shift towards, rather than in spite of, difference. This involves a suspension in the reconciliation or transcendence of difference without suspending difference altogether. As such, transnational feminism is perhaps one of the first fields where solidarity across difference has been so astutely articulated as a basis for political struggle.

Unlike other forms of global solidarity, such as in anti-war, peace, and environmental movements, transnational feminism hinges on attending to the asymmetry between women across difference rather than producing unity in spite of difference. Whereas the environmental movements call on us to overcome our differences in our shared interest of ecological and environmental sustainability, transnational feminism calls for forms of solidarity embedded in contestation, fragmentation, affiliation and coalition. The coalitional possibility of transnational feminism is thus embedded in the need to articulate the relationship of gender to scattered hegemonies such as global economic structures, patriarchal nationalisms, ‘authentic’ forms of tradition, local structures of domination, and legal-juridical oppression on multiple levels. Transnational feminist practices require this kind of comparative work rather than the relativistic linking of ‘differences’ undertaken by proponents of ‘global feminism’; that is, to compare multiple, overlapping, and discrete
oppressions rather than to construct a theory of hegemonic oppression under a unified category of gender. (Grewal & Kaplan 1994, 17)

However, despite the moves that transnational feminism has made for attending to a more ethical model of feminist solidarity, in both theory and practice, the problem of difference remains a recurring site of risk for social movements. The simultaneous requirement to attend to difference and transcend difference, to both suspend the subject and look to diverse subjects for solidarity, produce a paradox and serious challenge to the project of solidarity. In the next section, I examine the sustained problem of difference within transnational feminism further in order to demonstrate how the reconciling of the problem of difference in solidarity requires more than a deconstruction of the subject and expansion of feminist affiliations.

The Trap of Difference for Feminist Solidarity

In the previous section, I discussed how postmodern thought, shaped by the deconstruction of the subject and rejection of modernism, transformed the conditions around which solidarities could be articulated within feminism. However, the challenges of difference, identity and systemic asymmetry in both global sisterhood and transnational feminism remain the same; they both continue to rely on a stable subject, even following the turn to diverse, multiple and plural subjectivities. For example, the rise of women of colour feminist activism collectivized the diverse struggles and experiences of different women across racial categories. However, within women of colour movements, political agency and attachment require stable identification with a racialized identity. Debates about the role of ethnic versus racialized women, mixed-raced women, and Trans-people abound in women of colour feminist movements, which require stable notions of gendered and racialized identities to form the basis of collective struggle.

Although we see a shift from solidarity among women as a universal category, to solidarity across diverse women as a plural category, the persistence of the problem of identifying the subjects of solidarity require these movements to speak to stable gendered and racialized identities. The paradox here is that despite the attempt to overcome the problem of universalization, the diversification of feminist politics through multiple and intersecting identities embeds solidarity in the articulation of coherent subjects of difference. In her critique of feminist appropriations of the politics of location, Caren Kaplan (1994) argues, “in an effort to
deconstruct hegemonic, global universals, quite often theorists of ‘difference’ have reinstituted hegemonies” (148). Although Kaplan remains hopeful about the possibility of attending to difference, particularly by focusing on solidarity and coalition building, we find here the crux of the problem: the turn to difference is not enough to overcome the risks that accompany any model of solidarity rooted in identity-based attachments.

The problem of difference in transnational feminism is not simply a conceptual challenge to feminist thinking, rather it explains why feminist solidarity remains so heavily contested decades after transnational feminist models of solidarity across difference were introduced. The trouble here is that despite how much we might celebrate difference, our attachments – for instance to identity, or to our wounds (Brown 1995) – are already risky endeavours. Attachments can betray us even in our moments of good intention. This does not mean that we should reject transnational feminism’s turn to solidarity across difference; indeed we need to see value in difference if we are to resist universalization. However, it does mean that we need a model of solidarity that is capable of holding the contradictions and competitions of difference in our solidarities. We must recognize that even in our attempts at producing intersectional coalitions, for example, we cannot rely on our celebration of difference to overcome the problem of asymmetry.

Across the empirical literature on transnational feminist activism and social movements we find a recurring problem concerning the subject of feminist solidarity. In her research on transnational feminism at the 2007 World Social Forum (WSF) in Nairobi, Janet Conway (2010) examines the divergent streams of three different tracks of transnational feminist organizing at the WSF. Based on the relative monocultural representation of participants in the Feminist Dialogues stream at the WSF (161), she concludes, “feminist encounters at the WSF involve contestations over the character of feminism itself” (168, emphasis original). These contestations revolved around two different streams of feminist organizing at the WSF, generalizable as distinctions between interests across the Global North and the Global South. Dufour et al. (2010) similarly articulate the problem of power asymmetry across the North-South divide in transnational feminist movements (16). Here, global versus regional interests (such as lesbian rights and abortion) are articulated as problems of difference. Despite the attempts to expand the terms of feminist solidarity across identities and interests, competing feminist interests and identities replicate the fragmentation of difference in attempts at feminist solidarity because the
overarching structures of power embed us in asymmetry. Thus, although feminist solidarity across social differences expands the parameters for feminist organizing, feminist movement building still succumbs to the challenge of competing and asymmetrical identities. To resolve this problem, we must consider the space of feminist solidarity as a space already constituted by the risk of conflicting interests.

The problem of difference in feminist solidarity is furthered compounded by the neoliberalization of transnational feminism through the model of the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), commonly referred to as the “NGO-ization” of feminist activism. In Nahla Abdo’s (1995) work on Palestinian women’s struggles, she argues that the shift towards increasing institutionalization of women’s NGOs in Palestine impacted the quality and direction of feminist organizing. Here, the shift of women’s activism during the first Intifada, the Palestinian uprising from 1987-1991, from women acting as participants of the uprising to increasing focus on service provision, demonstrates a problem of over-reliance on the global economies of development and aid. Similarly, Nira Yuval-Davis (2006) argues that feminist movements have largely adopted a focus on human rights and development (276), which lead to increasingly professionalized forms of feminist advocacy with a focus on “normative yardsticks” for women’s liberation through legal reform (291). For Yuval-Davis, these shifts in feminist activism are a product of the neoliberalization of transnational feminism, which re-scripts transnational feminist solidarity into a model of organizing that replicates the hegemonic systems of the nation-state, international law, and neoliberal governance mediated through funding structures of both governmental and non-governmental organizations working on women’s rights. In part, this is a result of the disjuncture between transnational feminist theory and transnational feminism movement building, whereby the centering of feminist solidarity across difference remains beholden to the economic relations of globalization. Yuval-Davis interprets this shift as a kind of corruption of transnational feminism. However, I would argue that what we see in the contradiction between transnational feminist ideals and their manifestation in the NGO model is the pre-existing risk that accompanies all attachments.

Despite what contradictions there might be between the value of feminist solidarity across difference and the reality of the economic dependency of transnational feminist movements on funding systems, the circumstance we are left with is a landscape of feminist solidarity entangled with power asymmetries. Caren Kaplan (1994) warns us of the constraints of
neoliberalism on transnational feminism. “In a transnational world where cultural asymmetries and linkages continue to be mystified by economic and political interests at multiple levels, feminists need detailed, historicized maps of the circuits of power. As superpowers realign and markets diversify, many of the conventional boundaries of earlier eras have been dismantled” (148). Kaplan argues that neoliberal shifts at the level of culture, aesthetics, economics and mobility have heavily impacted feminist organizing. We cannot escape the problem of power asymmetry in feminist movements; therefore, we must prioritize attentiveness to the risk that accompanies all circuits of power, even those in feminist solidarity. Further, we must not romanticize the relationship between solidarity and difference, because the burden of our attachments risks unraveling our capacity for solidarity. If we cannot be certain of the ways that power circulates in our attempts at solidarity, then the turn to the marginalized or subjugated will neither remove us from the burden of power asymmetries, nor will it ensure that our gestures of solidarity are free from universalism, cultural relativism, individualism, fragmentation, or essentialism.

With the introduction of queer and trans theories and poststructural critiques of gender, feminist solidarity has also remained plagued by a sustained problem of transphobia and gender essentialism. In her critique of feminist and queer theory’s mobilization of transsexuality, Viviane Namaste (2011) challenges articulations of feminist solidarity that claim feminists as allies of transsexual and transgendered people through the affiliation of gender identity (xvi). Namaste’s argument challenges the privileging of representational concerns over those of institutional and lived realities of transsexual women in particular (27), and her critique illustrates the foundational problem of difference in articulations of solidarity and alliance building across feminist, queer and trans politics. Namaste argues, “a critical analysis of representation must do more than specify the social, historical, and political contexts of the subject under investigation” (230). Because solidarity across difference is an expansive model that continues to mobilize a legible and representable subject for diverse inclusion within the terms of solidarity, this model of solidarity falls short under Namaste’s terms of meaningful alliance. If solidarity with transsexual women requires more than the naming and representation

107 Donna Haraway’s (1997) work on situated knowledge proposes that the turn to multiple and partial subjectivities of the subjugated can help us produce what she calls feminist objectivity.
of difference under the banner of gender identity – exemplified by the popular moniker “women and trans people,” then the gesture of diversification can never fill in for the shortcomings of subject-based solidarities. At worst, these gestures of solidarity contribute to the continued mystification of the hegemonic structures of power at play in difference. For Namaste, the result is the erasure and diversion of both the political concerns and subjectivities of transsexual and transgender people.

Because the proposal to expand feminist solidarity across difference aims to overcome fragmentation through plurality, this model risks reinforcing the very systems it aims to oppose. Expansion across difference is clearly not enough. Although transnational feminist frameworks such as standpoint theory (Hartsock 1983; Haraway 1988), intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991), interlocking systems of oppression (Razack 2008), politics of location and affiliation (Kaplan 1994, Mohanty 2003), and transversal politics (Yuval-Davis 2006) aim to reconcile the problem of the subject of difference and affirm oppositional politics, particularly in opposition to neoliberalism, the practices of transnational feminist solidarity fall prey to the reification of difference. The continued reliance on representational concerns and recognition of multiple identities hold feminism and its movements to appeals to the state for inclusion rather than alternate forms of transformation and resistance. Transnational feminist movements end up relying on a stable feminist subject for articulating solidarity precisely because the turn to social difference requires representation. Even under the expanded categories of women of colour or Third World/Two-Thirds World women, rather than the middle-class white Western women, feminist solidarity falls back on the same structures of difference – of race and gender difference – that it aims to resist. For instance, Mohanty (2006) argues for a model of transnational feminist solidarity that centers on the epistemic privilege of women at the margins, and Third

108 For Dean Spade (2011), the turn to inclusion within hegemonic systems, such as social movements working towards legal equality, risks transferring struggles for justice into the fabric of those systems responsible for social inequalities (34). In his work on intersectionality and law reform, Spade (2013) argues that appeals for legal reforms embed actions in reinforcing the institutions and structures of the nation state rather than transforming them. For instance, domestic violence and anti-trafficking legislation may appear to be important, however it places increasing controls in the hands of the state, whereas decriminalization of sex work, fighting police violence and brutality, prison abolition, welfare and health care access, and immigration enforcement/border control (p.1042), offer a transformative model to address the problem of gender-based violence.

109 Carastathis (2008) argues, “despite the political hope with which it is invested, intersectionality contributes to – and does not remedy – the discursive unrepresentability of hyper-oppressed subjects” (29).
World/Two-Thirds World women (231). “It is precisely the potential epistemic privilege of these communities of women that opens up the space for demystifying capitalism and for envisioning transborder social and economic justice” (Mohanty, 250). Yet, the turn to the epistemic privilege of the margins can also elide the risk of solidarity. Like Haraway (1997), Mohanty draws on standpoint theory and suggests that we can better build solidarity by understanding the experiences of women who are the most oppressed. However, despite this shift towards an alternate subject for feminist solidarity, Mohanty’s premise remains rooted in the need to offer a subject for feminism and articulate an experience for feminist activism to mobilize around. Anna Carastathis (2008) argues that representational concerns in feminist politics of difference, particularly in models of intersectionality that have largely structured transnational feminist politics, falsely interpret identities as existing prior to political relations. She asserts that a more viable framework for feminist politics should attempt to “unearth conceptually and transform practically” (29) the political practices and relations that produce identities. Therefore, a model of feminist solidarity that aims to re-center feminist politics around the epistemic privilege of subjugation risks normalizing the epistemological and ontological accounts of women’s identities, rather than identifying and transforming those power relations that produce subjugated experiences. This risks valorizing the experience of subjugation at the expense of bringing our attention to the circuits of power and their embedded ideologies on the daily articulations of feminist experience and identity.\footnote{Not to mention the more insidious effects of privileging women’s stories of their own suffering, which risks tokenizing or worse, fetishizing, difference.}

Yuval-Davis (2006) attempts to overcome the problem of stabilizing identity by using the work of Félïx Guattari and Seyla Benhabib on transversal politics. She suggests that the transversal offers the possibility of overcoming the challenge of universalizing politics, on the one hand, and identity politics on the other. In transversal politics, “notions of difference should be encompassed by, rather than replace, notions of equality” (281) by approaching alliance building through “dialogue between people of differential positionings, and the wider the better” \textit{(ibid)}. Under the framework of the transversal, the subject in feminist solidarity is fluid and decentered from a fixed identity or identities. To accomplish this task, Yuval-Davis proposes that we turn to positionality rather than identity, which appears to get closer to the crux of the
problem of solidarity across difference; however, she herself admits that this model further raises problems of the subject. “Although transversal politics avoids homogenizing social categories and groupings, it could be argued that it homogenizes and fixates the positionings of the subject in a way that necessarily distorts and/or excludes some dimensions of one’s subjectivity and identity” (284). Her solution is to focus on the process of positioning participants in the production of epistemological communities in a dynamic process. However, even in doing so, Yuval-Davis’ proposal remains embedded in the problem of the subject of difference by requiring a dynamic rather than static subject to center solidarity on. In spite of the attempt to destabilize the subject as fragmented and decentered, transversal politics are tricky to institute in practice because the very practice of locating difference re-inscribes those very sites.

Take for example, the queer Palestine movement. Who are the subjects of this movement? We find various actors ranging across geographic locations and identities, including: Western-based non-Palestinians, Western-based Palestinians, Middle East-based Palestinian activists, Middle East-based non-Palestinians, queers, non-queers, and the list goes on. Within a model of solidarity across difference, such as we find in transnational feminism, attending to the differences across participants in the queer Palestine movement should be at the center of producing solidarity. Adapting this model to the transversal framework Yuval-Davis proposes, we might understand all these subjectivities as more fluid and dynamic – some Western-based activists are Palestinian, others may be racialized, some were born in Canada, perhaps the non-Palestinian non-queer activists have been to Palestine and worked directly with Palestinian activists. For the transversal, the process of working across those differences is at the core of building feminist solidarity. However, in both these models, the identities, social locations and positions of the participants in social movements are central to collectivization. The problem with this is that within the realm of the transnational, we can never properly attend to the identity and position of the other who is geographically distant. This leaves our capacity for solidarity vulnerable to the fictions we narrate about others in the absence of the stories others might tell about themselves. For instance, it is much easier to construct a fiction about the importance of our solidarities with queer Palestinians from Canada than it is to know whether these solidarities are useful or even meaningful to people who are queer in Palestine. Nayrouz Abu Hatoum (2013) has called the effect of this practice a “burden on queer Palestine,” whereby gestures of solidarity
from the West elicit the production of idealized political queer Palestinians to be in solidarity
with.

Within the queer Palestine movement, the disjuncture between gestures of solidarity and queer Palestinian subjectivities finds us turning, at times, to contradictory strategies. For example, localized boycott projects for queer Palestinian activists sometimes differ in their goals and orientations from boycott projects in North America. Rather than focusing on targeting international tourists for boycott, Haneen Maikey, the director of alQaws and a queer Palestinian activist, has articulated her own relationship to boycott as the refusal to participate in branches of the Israeli state within civil society. In her keynote address to the April 2013 Homonationalism and Pinkwashing conference, Maikey states,

the guiding force of my own activism is the conscious and uncompromising position of practicing decolonization efforts when possible and despite the inherent contradictions as someone who lives within and under the direct control of the colonizing power … the intended disconnection from your colonizer … including, the historical decisions to separate from Jewish-Israeli groups, the rejection to connect with LGBT groups on the basis of sexual orientation, who don’t have a stand against Zionism and their complicity with Zionism, and the refusal to be coopted in reformist actions led by Israeli progressive groups … as the Palestinian queer project is neither to reform Israel, nor Pride, nor LGBT groups. 111

As Maikey argues, Palestinian queer political interests arise out of differing concerns than those of transnational solidarity activists, particularly in their relationship between colonizers and the colonized. For transnational solidarity activists, the relationship of solidarity is fundamentally different because of their positioning outside of colonial subject making in Palestine/Israel. Therefore, solidarity in this case must be understood as a relationship that might center on tensions and contradictions, as much as it centers on attachments and identifications.

The above case appears to support the argument Yuval-Davis makes for transversal politics, however it does leave us with a lingering problem for solidarity. Although we might mediate differences in transnational solidarity by working together using global communications (like email and video or voice calls) and even international gatherings, like at the World Social

Forum, our solidarities are nonetheless embedded in the differences that remain cloaked under complex power relations across identities and geopolitical landscapes. While we might aim for a model of solidarity that highlights the voices of queer Palestinians as an essential practice of transnational feminist solidarity, this model still leaves solidarity vulnerable to the influences of ideologies and circuits of power underlying these gestures. As Abu Hatoum argues, “local Palestinian queer discourse is … becoming dehistoricized” by the fueling of transnational interests for mobilizing international queer solidarity campaigns, and although such a burden is not inevitable, the risk remains a clear and central danger to movement practices.

Central to my concern is a question about how we choose whom to be in solidarity with. Can we be in solidarity without a stable figure to be in solidarity with? Is there a right or a wrong figure to connect our solidarities to? For instance, pinkwashing propaganda often generates a queer Palestinian who testifies against the homophobia of Palestinian society and celebrates the liberal lifestyle of Tel Aviv. Should transnational solidarity activists reverse this discourse by finding queer Palestinians who will testify against Israel and for a homosocial Palestine? We cannot take the relationship of discernment for granted, and this is an uncomfortable but necessary problem that we must face in practices of solidarity, which exceeds the capacities of models of solidarity that celebrate difference or highlight the visibility of subjugated identities. In my own participation in queer Palestine solidarity activism through QuAIA Toronto, I often felt troubled by the messaging we used, such as posters that read “we stand with queers in Palestine.” These messages evoked a strategic attachment to queer Palestinian identity that served the interests of transnational solidarity, but also mobilized a fantasy of stable Palestinian queer subjects who we could be in solidarity with.

In her reflection on feminism and postmodernism, Judith Butler (1992) argues that although the representational politics that shaped postmodern feminism are essential for the political work of feminist activism, this pragmatic project must be reconciled with the risk of reifying the subject of feminism (15). To do so, Butler argues for a poststructural feminist deconstruction of the feminist subject, which includes “continu[ing] to use them, to repeat them subversively, and to displace them from the contexts in which they have been deployed as instruments of oppressive power” (17). Drawing on postcolonial and transnational feminist critique, particularly the work of Gayatri Spivak, Butler warns that the risk of not doing this deconstructive work will lead to the adoption of the very models of domination that feminism
seeks to resist (14). Poststructural feminist deconstruction codifies the problem of the subject in transnational feminist solidarity by pointing to the paradox of organizing around social difference. Butler’s proposal to deconstruct the subject, rather than make the subject dynamic (as Yuval-Davis’ model of the transversal proposes), appears to be hopeful, but how would such a deconstruction play out for building a new model for feminist solidarity in practice? The problem presented by deconstruction is one of knowledge and truth of the subject. Spivak (1996b) explains, “deconstruction does not say there is no subject, there is no truth, there is no history. It simply questions the privileging of identity so that someone is believed to have the truth” (27). In Derrida’s (1997) work on différance and deconstruction, he demonstrates how the coherence of the subject is already co-constituted by its other in difference. The outside other is already required to distinguish the coherence of an identity – which marks the paradox of all meaning within the framework of binary opposition. To both homogenize and diversify difference within solidarity maintains the discursive cohesion of the problem. As Chantal Mouffe (1995) argues, “every identity is relational and that the affirmation of a difference is the precondition for the emergence of any identity” (104). Similarly, Spivak argues, “repetition is the basis of identification. Thus, if repetition alters, it has to be faced that alteration identifies and identity is always impure” (87).

The deconstructive critique of the subject destabilizes the coherence of difference articulated under the diversification of subjectivities under transnational feminism. Thus, as transnational feminism flips the single-subject of feminist solidarity under global sisterhood to the multiplied model of feminist solidarities, we continue to face the very problem of the subject that embeds solidarity in the realm of contested representation and subjectivities. The deconstructive approach provides an important insight into where we may think about the problem of difference in feminist solidarity, however it remains difficult to translate across feminist theory into the realm of feminist activism. In practice, social movements emergent in the postmodern period, such as contemporary feminist activism, have largely been trapped in the politics of representation and have been incapable of applying deconstructive techniques to the formation of feminist political projects. The focus on the subject of solidarity remains a consistent challenge for identifying who can or should be part of feminist solidarity.

Both the neoliberal restructuring of transnational feminist projects and the internal fracturing within feminist movements over the proper subjects of feminist solidarity have left
feminist movements grasping for terms to build solidarity. Despite the tools that transnational feminist scholarship has offered for thinking about solidarity across difference, our consistent return to the problem of difference has replicated the fragmenting debates and movement stagnation that seem endemic to contemporary feminist social movements. My intent here is not to dismiss the important interventions that transnational feminism has made into the theories and practices of social change. Indeed, transnational feminist critique is essential for the political projects of contemporary feminist organizing, particularly because of the field’s capacity to reveal the co-constitutive fabrics of colonialism, capitalism, neoliberalism and globalization with systems of patriarchy. Yet the question of feminist solidarity remains a challenge that has not yet been resolved in contemporary social movements. My experience working in the queer Palestine movement, however, has come closest to approximating the deconstructive questions raised about feminist solidarity above. Turning to this movement, I am interested in the way that queerness grapples with the question of difference, and how queer ambivalence in particular suspends particular relationships of attachment – such as to the nation or to normativity.

Queer Ambivalence and Queer Solidarities

The elusiveness of the deconstructive approach in practices of feminist solidarity does not make it an impossible feat. The field of queer theory and queer activism is one site where a deconstructive model has taken root. I turn to queer theory to tease out how the deconstructive technique can be applied to solidarity, precisely because queerness’ attachments are oriented towards an uncomfortable relationship to practices of fixing, normalization and definition. The deconstructive relationship to queerness opens space for moving through the sticky tensions of subjectivity and belonging, rather than foreclosing those tensions through the stabilization of a coherent subject. It is worth noting here that beyond its theoretical engagements with postmodern and poststructuralist frameworks, queerness is one of the few orientations (ideologically and politically) that is largely constituted by a form of mutability and a capacity for self-critique. As the progeny of feminist theory and politics, the turn to the queer dominated scholarship in the late-20th century precisely because it offered an intellectual and political framework reflective of its time. For Butler (1993), “the critique of the queer subject is crucial to the continuing democratization of queer politics” (19). As such, notions of ambivalence, mutability,
unsettlement and tension in queer activism are more than simply moments of poststructural critique, they also mark the ways that processes of identification and belonging are emergent and divergent.

Transnational queer solidarity builds on queer poststructural critiques of sexuality, identity, belonging, and nationalism through concepts of homonormativity (Duggan 2002; Agathangelou et al. 2008), homonationalism (Puar 2007) and pinkwashing (Puar 2011; Schulman 2011). Instead of assembling around attachments to social differences, queer interventions are often oriented towards political attachments (e.g. critiques of normativity). To be precise, I am distinguishing between queer as a critical framework and queer as an identity, a distinction I will return to in more detail in Chapter 4. Queerness in this form privileges a resistance to structure, rather than an identification with sexual identity, by rejecting institutions such as marriage, militarism, and other normalizing forces governing life. Thus, the queer Palestine movement foregrounds critiques of colonialism, imperialism and nationalism in queer politics. Further, the wide acceptance of queer solidarity in the Palestine liberation movement disrupts orientalist language that posits Palestinian culture as homophobic. Although this is perhaps mostly a symbolic benefit, the impact of wider acknowledgement and acceptance of queer subjectivities can also contribute to the deconstruction of normative impulses in nationalist movements. As such, queerness does not simply define the status of the actors of queer solidarity, nor does it only address the discursive and ideological mechanisms of homonationalism, but it also transforms and disrupts the normativity of ethnic nationalism. Here, queerness interrupts the narrative of national liberation predicated on the power of men, and challenges the heteronormativity of anti-colonial movements that pigeonhole women through their reproductive role as mothers and wives.

Queer activism in these movements has also largely resisted the impulse to mobilize around claims to sexual identity as the primary way of conceptualizing transformation. Instead, the queerness of these sites of activism resides in the disruptions and tensions that these interventions interject into normative narratives of national belonging and subjectivity. What is distinct about these emergent forms of queer critique is the centering of *a queer analysis* rather than *a subject* in queer activism. Thus, queer activism centers on resistance against state cooption of rights and justice discourses, and a critique of neoliberal seduction into capitalist, consumer, and nationalist narratives for imagining emancipation, rather than a call for sexual liberation of
queer subjects. At the core of the queer Palestine movement is a focus on the critique of pinkwashing practices by the Israeli state. This shift towards the discursive in anti-pinkwashing organizing is illustrative of the neoliberal shifts in Israeli state practices, which shifted in the first decade of the 21st century towards an international public relations campaign.\textsuperscript{112} The discursive shift in both Israeli state practices and anti-pinkwashing activism as a new form of solidarity reveals both new discourses that normalize colonial and state violence and a shift in gestures of solidarity in the era of neoliberalism and homonationalism.

Distinguishing the transnational queer Palestine solidarity and anti-pinkwashing movement from the larger Palestine solidarity movement reveals two key points. First, queer frames of transnational solidarity produce new discourses of resistance within the field of the transnational, whereby the call for solidarity is only not structured through the narrative of liberation of the queer subject per se, but rather a queer critique of neoliberal mechanisms under state violence, such as anti-pinkwashing and anti-homonationalism campaigns, which I explore in Chapter 3. This shift towards the discursive in the project of queer resistance is emblematic of a new terrain of political contestation that shifts the terms of transnational solidarity, moving from a model of solidarity that articulates a connection across queer identifications to a model of solidarity framed by queer analysis and critique. This shift is exemplified on the Pinkwatching Israel website in the “about” section, where they state, “Pinkwatching Israel is a queer-powered global movement with three goals: to expose efforts by Israel and its supporters to pinkwash Israeli crimes; to promote BDS against Israel; to create a solid, connected community of queer and social justice activists working towards justice in Palestine.”\textsuperscript{113} Here, we find an articulation of solidarity rooted in critique and intervention, rather than identification – the call is not “to liberate queers in Palestine” but to expose state practices, promote BDS strategies, and build networks. Such articulations further become important guides for Western-based solidarity activists, such as QuAIA Toronto, where QuAIA’s messaging shifted towards increasing critiques of pinkwashing practices and support for the BDS movement.

\textsuperscript{112} This public relations campaign is commonly referred to as Brand Israel (Puar 2011; Schulman 2011), and is examined in Chapter 3 in more details.

Second, in the emergence of feminist and queer approaches to anti-colonial struggles, we find new frames for articulating transnational solidarity. These new approaches to transnational solidarity include a more diverse and broader notion of liberation that extends across not only national liberation, but also across bodily and sexual rights while remaining ambivalent about the subject of solidarity. Within the Palestine liberation movement, we already find feminist and anti-patriarchal narratives that push against patriarchal forms of nationalist liberation through feminist claims for justice (Abdo 1993 & 1995; Jad 1995; Sharoni 2012). These claims are rooted in transnational feminist frameworks, which identify the intersectional conditions facing Palestinian women through simultaneous conditions of colonialism and patriarchy. Queer forms of Palestine liberation and solidarity also mark a disjuncture from models of national liberation that highlight the reproductive role of citizenship, however they do so not by highlighting the multiple oppressions that structure gendered identities, rather these queer critiques intervene in the mobilization of sexual- and bodily-rights in the project of nationalism. Palestine-based groups ASWAT and alQaws both highlight the connection between gender, sexuality and bodily rights in their mission statements and “about” sections of their websites. For instance, alQaws describes itself as a group of “Palestinian activists who work collaboratively to break down gendered and hetero-normative barriers.” As such, the queer activists in Palestine intervene not only in the conditions of state violence and the deployment of sexual rights to uphold the nation state, but they extend that critique across sectors of society in a way that blends intersectional transnational feminist politics with the deconstructive orientations of queer politics.

As we can see from the above example, transnational queer activism mobilizes around a critique of the nation and globalization in a similar way to transnational feminism, but is able to avoid getting caught in contestation over the subjects of feminism in articulating solidarity. Without needing to reconcile who queer solidarity activists are, the queer Palestine movement accomplishes a framework of transnational solidarity rooted in critique and is able to move

\[114\] alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society. http://www.alqaws.org/q/content/who-are-we (accessed December 18, 2013)

\[115\] The subject of feminism includes not only those participants in feminist movements, but also those who feminists movements stand in solidarity with.
across transnational alliances with diverse people in solidarity. For example, at the Queer Visions gathering at the World Social Forum, the group of transnational queer Palestine solidarity activists that I participated in issued a public declaration at the WSF General Assembly. The statement called on the international community to adopt a critique of pinkwashing in the wider Palestine liberation movement, including:

1. identify pinkwashing as one of the main strategies used by the Israeli state and its supporters to divert attention away from the oppression of the Palestinian people;
2. oppose the use of pinkwashing by Israel;
3. actively support the work of organizations resisting pinkwashing as an essential part of the movement;
4. fight against racism, islamophobia, and forms of sexual and bodily oppressions including patriarchy, sexism, homophobia and transphobia in all societies.\textsuperscript{116}

It is worth noting here that the statement does not request recognition of queer identities or queer activists within the Palestine liberation movement, rather it calls for recognition of the techniques used in pinkwashing practices that instrumentalize sexuality and sexual rights. Further, the final statement calls on a cross-sectional commitment to wider societal transformation, rather than a request for inclusion within the movement. As transnational queer solidarities build on intervention rather than shared identification, subjectivity or connection, they open up space for activist interventions that reinterpret, play with, and ultimately destabilize the very coherence of the categories they attack. More specifically, these interventions mobilize queerness as a way to challenge the state cooption of sexual rights for the project of nation-building while also refusing to articulate a stable “truth” of sexual subjectivity. Here, the efficiency of these queer interventions lies in the capacity to intervene without having to disclose an authentic subject for representation.

In both activist and academic genres, solidarity is often celebrated as an ideal approach to difference, or an innocent political position. This is not to say that solidarity is a naïve desire, nor is it to argue that solidarity is unattainable; rather, I am suggesting that solidarity in its transnational articulations is in need of reflection precisely because our desires are entangled with social asymmetry and the insidious ideologies of neoliberalism, which replicate those very

systems that feminist critique seeks to transform. How we attend to difference is necessary if we are to consider how social movements can move through hegemonic configurations and inspire transformation without re-inscribing the violence that accompanies the production of new social formations through expulsion. To reconsider our approach to social movements is crucial in this moment, as revolution increasingly resonates within global and local contexts, and we are left to consider how to imagine our oppositional politics beyond our current systems.

Transnationalism introduces a particular set of considerations for thinking about solidarity, primarily through the contexts of proximity and asymmetry. Proximity, the simultaneous problem of geographic distance and the absence of a tangible relationship to the other, results in a trend towards the fictionalization of a desired solidarity object. Here, we find the gaps between gestures of solidarity and the conditions of those claimed to be in solidarity with. Asymmetry, the unequal balance of power, access to resources, and freedom of movement structured by colonial histories and conditions of globalization, replicates hierarchies within solidarity movements. The geopolitical problem of the Global North versus the Global South, the problem of historic Western colonial practices and contemporary forms of Western imperialism through globalization and war, and the imperializing project of contemporary liberal democracy.

This chapter examined the conflicts within feminist theory and activism in articulations of feminist solidarity in the move from feminist universalism to transnational feminist solidarities. I looked at how the problem of the subject and the challenge of difference embedded transnational feminist solidarities in a similar trap of representational fragmentation that plagued global sisterhood models of feminism. Using poststructural feminist deconstructive techniques, I proposed that we must build a model of solidarity that remains ambivalent about the subject of solidarity. Turning then to a brief overview of queer forms of activism, I introduced how transnational queer Palestine solidarity and anti-pinkwashing activism offers a model for thinking through how queer ambivalence in solidarity might assist us in remaining attentive to the risks in our attachments. As such, the queer Palestine movement marks an important shift in the way claims for justice are being rearticulated in the era of advanced neoliberalism and the conditions of homonationalism.

Although this chapter offers a critique of the limits of feminist solidarity articulated in transnational feminism, I have also demonstrated how queer solidarities in the Palestine
movement are reliant on transnational feminist theories and critiques of the nation state, neoliberalism, globalization and patriarchy. Indeed, transnational feminism is essential to the building of queer transnational solidarities. My intention is also to excavate solidarity from identity-based debates in the hopes of resolving the obstacles to our solidarities and reconcile the imagined disjuncture between transnational feminist and queer politics. To reconcile feminist and queer thinking is neither new, nor novel. Early work in queer feminist scholarship foregrounds concerns over identity and the problem of fragmentation in feminist politics. Here, Butler’s cautionary warning that identity “as a point of departure can never hold as the solidifying ground of a feminist political movement” (15) marks a reminder that difference offers a useful entry point for shifting discourses in feminist solidarity, not a conclusion for a new model of feminist politics. If we consider building models of transnational solidarity that might originate in injured identities but quickly move towards critical interventions as the unifying basis of solidarity, we may be more successful in our transformative projects.
Chapter 3

Risk, Desire and Adaptation: The Paradox of Queer Solidarity Under Neoliberalism & Homonationalism

[Death] is the object of desire that finally releases us from desire

— Adam Phillips

When does a social movement fail? At what point is the capacity of a group to engage in transformative practices exhausted? What happens when an emerging social movement starts to wane just when it seems to have gained momentum? On February 26 2015, Queers Against Israeli Apartheid Toronto (QuAIA) announced that the group would be retiring. The news of QuAIA’s demise came as a shock to many, and as a longtime member of the Toronto-based organization, in the months following I fielded countless questions from friends, allies and other activists on why we allowed the group to die. The first line of questioning is often a defensive one: Why kill a group that works? How can you betray the movement? In part, these questions make sense, since the dissolution of a group or a social movement is easily interpreted as a failure. However, what might appear to be “giving up” – a sign of weakness in the competitively driven landscape of late capitalism – may actually be a sign of reinvention, transience, and fertile possibility. It is one thing for an activist to quit a group, but it’s another thing for a group to quit its own existence. Adam Phillips (2000), in his work on Freud’s death drive, argues that the way we narrate death is “integral to our life stories” (71). Phillips proposes that Freud’s death instinct is both an act of refusal – the refusal to be known – and an act of self-fashioning our own life stories (77). So what does it mean for a group to fashion its own end? I offer this chapter as a reflection back on my six years of work organizing with QuAIA Toronto, and the hindsight that an attentiveness to risk can reveal about activist attachments and the possibility of transformation in transnational queer solidarity activism; or, to risk vulnerability – this chapter is a critique of

my own attachments and the risks I have come to recognize in my solidarity work. In an attempt to self-fashion a better end for QuAIA, an end that recognizes when risk exceeds the transformative potential of solidarity, my stakes are to offer some insight into the complex interplay between risk, desire and attachment in activist practices of solidarity.

In many ways, social movements mirror our unconscious desires. Groups, like QuAIA, can be playgrounds where we might imagine our own immortality – the movement is bigger than any one individual and in this way the individual lives on in the movement. But there is a risk in attaching to our desire for immortality in social movements: it makes social movements responsive to our own desires at the expense of the transformative possibilities that contradict our life stories (e.g. that we are saving the world, that we are good people). Phillips says “being able or willing to change is, in the strongest sense, adaptive” (126). We need “to be able, if need be, to dispel our attachments to people and ideas, and ultimately to ourselves” (127) if we want to sustain survival. By now, it is clear that I am concerned with the risk that permeates all gestures of solidarity in social movements, especially when this threatens to unravel the transformative potential of activist practices. Looking to the tension between risk and adaptation in the strategies and practices of QuAIA Toronto – the group I helped to develop and helped to kill – this chapter investigates how neoliberal ideologies unwittingly structure the fashioning of activist desires and attachments. Weighing risk against strategy, I want to highlight how queer solidarities are caught in a paradox symptomatic of our times: neoliberalism has commodified human rights discourses and instrumentalized sexualities to serve the interests of hegemonic power and obfuscate state violence. Jasbir Puar calls this homonationalism, a facet of modernity “marked by the entrance of (some) homosexual bodies as worthy of protection by nation-states, a constitutive and fundamental reorientation of the relationship between the state, capitalism, and sexuality” (2013, 337).

I begin this chapter with an investigation of homonationalism, a period marked by the reorganization of the relationship between the nation state and its citizens. Reflecting on the attempts made against QuAIA and to have the term “Israeli apartheid” banned from the Toronto

118 As Phillips (2000) argues, “unconscious desire, by definition, renders us only minimally intelligible to ourselves” (21)
Pride Parade, I demonstrate how contestations over the politics of the Pride parade (i.e. who belongs in the Pride parade) reveal how homonational ideologies reconstitute the parameters of sexual identity and belonging. Next, I turn to QuAIA Toronto’s fight to march in the parade as a landscape through which neoliberal cooption and homonational reorganization of desire traps queer solidarities in a paradox between resistance against homonationalism and the reinforcement of neoliberal desires in the circulation of token figures of solidarity. I conclude by returning to the question of risk, desire and adaptation in the decision to retire QuAIA Toronto, reflecting on what I imagine to be hopeful possibilities of reorganizing social movement success through a commitment to transience.

Queer Solidarity in Homonational Times

From 2009 to 2014, annual attempts to ban QuAIA from the Toronto Pride Parade garnered international attention. This period saw a proliferation of groups working on queer Palestine solidarity and anti-pinkwashing activism, including: the 2012 LGBTIQ delegation to Palestine, the Queer Visions gathering at the World Social Forum: Free Palestine, the spread of autonomous Queers Against Israeli Apartheid groups in other cities (such as Vancouver, Seattle and New York), and the development of global networks like Pinkwatching Israel (Appendix 2). Combined with Palestinian-based queer organizations such as ASWAT, alQaws, and Palestinian Queers for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (PQBDS), these groups make up the most prominent, though not exhaustive, list of queer activism in the Palestine solidarity movement. Connected to the larger Palestinian liberation movement and Western-based radical queer activism, the queer Palestine movement navigates a complex line between human rights, liberation politics, and nationalism. Unlike other contemporary social movements mobilizing

119 Although queer organizing on Palestine originated in the 1990s, with queer messages of solidarity with Palestine showing up at Pride parades in Toronto as early as 1990. By the early 2000s, explicitly queer Palestine-focused groups began forming, such as: Palestinian-based groups ASWAT Palestinian Gay Women in 2002 and alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society in 2006; and Queers Undermining Israeli Terrorism (QUIT) in San Francisco and Black Laundry in Israel in 2001. Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA) Toronto formed in 2008, followed by a number of other QuAIA groups forming in cities across North America, most notably in New York, Seattle and Vancouver, among others. In 2010, the global anti-pinkwashing network pinkwatchingisrael.com was launched, and Palestinian Queers for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (PQBDS) was formed. In recent years, increasing international networking across groups has occurred, such as the queer gathering at World Social Forum: Free Palestine in 2012 under the banner of Queer Visions.
around sexuality, the queer Palestine movement does not organize itself around the achievement of sexual rights or the sexual liberation of Palestinians; rather, it supports the efforts of Palestinian queer activists while intervening in the ideologies of contemporary sexual rights and nationalisms. Emerging in opposition to the way sexual rights have been used to bolster the Israeli state’s public image in the early 21st century, the queer Palestine movement is unique for its focus on the discursive. I draw attention to the ways that queer activism produces new terms for solidarity in an era when sexual rights discourses are ripe in the logics of neoliberalism and subject to new forms of nationalism under the neoliberal nation state.

What does it mean to engage in queer solidarity in an era when politicians and governments claim to defend sexual rights? In her pivotal work on homonationalism, Jasbir Puar (2007) critically examines the terms of sexual rights under the nation state through US forms of sexual exceptionalism and the emergence of “an exceptional form of national homonormativity” (2). Puar’s early work on homonationalism has most readily been taken up to critique the nation state and sexual citizenship, although she has later clarified that homonationalism is a facet of contemporary modernity that converges “state practices, transnational circuits of queer commodity culture and human rights paradigms” (2013, 337). Puar’s critique reveals the mechanisms of both state practices and shifting discourses around sexual rights that result in the reorganization of the nation state, capitalism and sexualities, which entrench claims for sexual rights in the project of American, and I would argue Canadian and Israeli, exceptionalism and empire building (e.g. through Middle East foreign policy). In her later work, Puar distinguishes homonationalism from its manifestation in the practices of nation states and citizenship; homonationalism is thus marked by periodization – it is an ideology, a time, an “analytics of power” (ibid.) – not a practice, political position or identity.

The queer Palestine movement developed largely by translating Puar’s critique of homonationalism to analyze and critique the use of sexuality by the Israeli state and its lobbyists

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120 For example, the movements in solidarity against the homophobic nationalism of anti-gay laws in Uganda and Russia in 2013-2014.

121 Critiques of homonationalism situate state practices within contemporary forms of empire building, which consist of the consolidation of global resources in the Global North through globalized multinational corporations and structural adjustment policies in the Global South, war and the military-industrial complex, and the shifting discourses around governance, sovereignty and models of liberal-democracy.
to bolster the state’s global image.\textsuperscript{122} Both Puar (2011) and Schulman (2011), taking cue from the critiques developed by groups like QuAIA and PQBDS, researched the rise of pinkwashing discourses within Israel’s rebranding campaign and demonstrated that attacks on Israel’s image have become one of the largest threats to the state’s nationalist project. In the queer Palestine movement, campaigns against Israeli pinkwashing comprise the core of movement activities, such as the campaign to boycott gay tourism to Israel (see Figures 3 and 4).\textsuperscript{123}

\textbf{Figure 3:} “Boycott Gay Tourism to Israel,” poster used by QuAIA Toronto at the 2013 Pride Parade. (Image courtesy of QuAIA Toronto)

\textbf{Figure 4:} “There’s Nothing Hot About Cruising in an Apartheid State,” poster used by QuAIA Toronto at the 2013 Pride Parade. (Image courtesy of QuAIA Toronto)

\textsuperscript{122} The showcasing of sexual rights to divert attention away from state and corporate violations of international law and human rights abuses

\textsuperscript{123} Focus on anti-pinkwashing activism directly correlates to the rising use of sexuality in the public relations, image branding and marketing projects of both the Israeli state’s rebranding campaign and the campaigns of pro-Israel lobbyists. For example, pro-Israel lobby groups such as Stand With Us http://www.standwithus.com and Size Doesn’t Matter http://www.sizedoesntmatter.com (both accessed May 16 2015).
However, Puar (writing with Maya Mikdashi) later critiqued activist use of homonationalism in the anti-pinkwashing campaigns, arguing that pinkwashing and anti-pinkwashing were both implicated in homonationalism. In Chapter 1, I discussed the debates that ensued from Puar and Mikdashi’s critique, and offered my own concerns over the way the debates over homonationalism and pinkwashing risked fragmenting the growth of the queer Palestine movement. These debates have come under scrutiny from other sources as well, including Jason Ritchie’s (2015) recent publication of his critique of Puar’s distinction between homonationalism and pinkwashing. Nonetheless, Puar’s (2013) later clarification on this distinction sheds light on the importance of recognizing the difference between the practices of nation states, lobbyists and individuals and the discursive and ideological shifts that represent a new nexus of power relations that we are all inescapably functioning through. However, contrary to her assertion that the critique of pinkwashing practices has distorted our capacity to understand homonationalism as an analytics of our times, I argue that the case of QuAIA Toronto’s anti-pinkwashing work and the group’s fight to march in the Pride parade reveals a much more nuanced and complex relationship between the critiques of homonationalism, activist strategizing and the risk of solidarity under the conditions of homonationalism.

QuAIA first formed in Toronto in 2008; that summer, a small group of activists marched under the QuAIA banner with a local labour union for the first time in the Toronto Pride parade. One year later, in May 2009, the Canadian newspaper The National Post incorrectly announced that the group had been banned from the parade. After public outrage forced Pride Toronto to clarify that the group had not actually been banned, QuAIA submitted an application to march as its own independent group in the upcoming 2009 parade. Subsequently, pro-Israel lobbyists and supporters of Israel in Toronto began mobilizing to have QuAIA banned from Pride. Between 2009 and 2012, the attempts to have QuAIA banned were primarily orchestrated by the combined efforts of lobbyists, including: a Toronto lawyer; a number of Toronto city councilors

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and politicians; and pro-Israel groups B’nai Brith Canada, the former Canadian Jewish Congress, and the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies.

Set against the backdrop of the larger conflict of Palestine/Israel and the debate over the term “Israeli apartheid,” backlash against QuAIA fell under three categories: 1) pro-Israel responses that viewed the term “Israeli apartheid” and QuAIA’s participation at Pride as an attempt to delegitimize the Israeli state; 2) municipal political agendas that used QuAIA as a guise for the neoliberal redistribution of public funds away from public cultural events and festivals; and 3) discourses around Pride that saw the parade as a celebration that should be free from politics. Lobbying both Pride Toronto’s internal parade policies and Pride’s funding sources, such as corporate sponsorship (comprising approximately 50% of Pride’s 2010 budget) and municipal funding (25% of Pride’s grant revenue and approximately 1/16 of Pride’s total funding), the above lobbyists attempted to place economic sanctions on Pride if QuAIA marched in the parade. In May 2010, the year that Pride’s slogan was “You Belong,” the efforts to ban QuAIA came to fruition when Pride Toronto announced that the term “Israeli Apartheid” would be censored from the parade. Under the threat of a motion at city council to defund the parade, the board of directors and executive director of Pride Toronto elected to ban the term in an attempt to appease critics of QuAIA and secure their funding. Motivated largely by economic pressure, Pride’s ban on the term “Israeli apartheid” is a prime example of how

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neoliberal economic redistribution shapes the culture of political discourses within spaces like Pride.

Lisa Duggan (2003) argues that late-20th and early-21st century neoliberalism is characterized by privatization and personal responsibility, terms that “define the central intersections between the culture of neoliberalism and its economic vision” (12). However, the combined analysis of neoliberal economic and cultural discourses surrounding Pride’s ban does not in and of itself explain why Pride did not just outright ban QuAIA from the parade, since the executive director of Pride stated that QuAIA could march under another name, such as “Queers in Favour of a Free Palestine.” The censorship of Queers Against Israeli Apartheid thus reveals an important shift in neoliberalization. Not only shaped by the multiple facets of contemporary neoliberalism, but a new set of power relations governing the relationship between state power, discourses of human rights, new forms of citizenship, circulation of capital, and international relations encompassed under homonationalism.

The combined conditions of neoliberalism and homonationalism functioned in three ways in the banning of “Israeli apartheid.” First, by placing the burden of responsibility onto QuAIA and its name, Pride’s response played into the logics of neoliberal individualism, which displaced institutional critiques and domesticated discourses of justice (Mohanty 2013, 986) in favour of upholding what Duggan (2003) calls “neoliberal ‘equality’ politics – a stripped-down, nonredistributive form of ‘equality’ designed for global consumption during the twenty-first century, and compatible with continued upward redistribution of resources” (xii). Second, Pride’s attempt to censor and include QuAIA reflects the neoliberal neutrality of a “nonpolitics,” (Duggan, 10) that aims to appear benevolent, amenable to “both sides” and upholds the status quo. Third, debates about the inclusion and exclusion of politics critical of the nation state in the ban on the term “Israeli apartheid,” reveal a central facet of homonationalism in the performance of nationalism “indebted to liberalism” (Puar 2007, 51), which contextualizes the two previous logics of neoliberalism within the changing terms of sexuality, nationalism, and belonging.

Although short-lived, the 2010 ban was lifted the following month after an outpouring of opposition from queer communities and public interventions against censorship, Pride’s ban on the term “Israeli apartheid” was not only a product of neoliberal logics of economic privatization and individualism, but marks a key site of sexual citizenship making. As QuAIA was invited to
march under a banner of national celebration for a “Free Palestine,” Pride’s censorship of criticism of the Israeli state speaks to the shifting limits of belonging within the parade. Under the slogan “You Belong,” the ban of the term “Israeli apartheid” reveals the tenuous terms of belonging that are shaped by homonationalism and comprise a shift towards inclusion of gay subjects into normalized citizenship under the nation state, and the simultaneous expulsion of subjects who threaten the nation state.

In their work on sexual citizenship, David Bell and Jon Binnie (2000) consider the interplay between sexuality and citizenship in the shifting articulations of contemporary forms of sexual subjectivity and sexual politics. For Bell and Binnie, the sexual citizen is an important figure in understanding how rights claims are navigated in the production of new modes of citizenship, through “the circumscription of ‘acceptable’ modes of being a sexual citizen” (3) such as in the shift towards gay marriage, the family, and consumerism. According to Bell and Binnie, the negotiation of sexual citizenship in rights discourses articulates new modes of public engagement, which reconfigures the public/private divide in the spatial logics of sexuality (4). Duggan (2002) identifies this turn to inclusion within the state as a new form of sexual citizenship, which she calls homonormativity. Thus, although the ban was temporary, the censorship of the term “Israeli apartheid” marks a formative moment in the reconfiguring of sexual citizenship in the Canadian neoliberal nation state. By calling on QuAIA to change its name in order to march, the group was offered a form of belonging predicated on alignment with a normalized sexual citizenship that bolstered, rather than opposed, the figure of the nation state (whether Israeli, Palestinian or Canadian). QuAIA’s members could therefore be in favour of Palestine but not opposed to Israeli state practices if they wanted to be included in the parade.

The proposal for QuAIA’s name change also presumed that Pride was offering QuAIA a politically neutral alternative – that by censoring the term “Israeli apartheid,” Pride was acting in the best interests of the values of the parade and its constituency by honoring the freedom of Israelis and Palestinians alike to celebrate nationalism in the Parade. Duggan (2002) argues that one of neoliberalism’s greatest successes is the illusion of political neutrality. She outlines how this is accomplished through the appearance of a mainstream that is produced in the triangulation between extreme politics on the Left and Right (176). Through this triangulation, QuAIA’s participation at Pride was consistently articulated in public debate through a neoliberal discursive trap that reinforced Pride’s ban as a politically neutral solution to its funding threat, and an
amenable middle ground between the poles of Israel and Palestine; a move that imagined the controversy over QuAIA to be about the conflict of Palestine/Israel rather than the conflict over QuAIA’s critique of the Israeli state. This slippage between sexual citizenship and nationalism, between the limits of belonging in the parade and the bolstering of the nation state, is a facet of the contemporary neoliberal nation state that exceeds a critique of homonormativity and demonstrates an underlying instability in the relationship between the nation state and sexual rights discourses. Here, the critique of homonationalism is essential for understanding how the combined anxiety over politics at Pride coincided with the reshaping of the space of the parade as a site where nationalism and citizenship were co-articulated through a shift in discourses of belonging.

As the public increasingly debated QuAIA through the press and online news forums, the terms of sexual citizenship were reconstituted with each articulation that QuAIA did not belong in Pride. Through these public articulations, sexual citizenship was renegotiated, not through appeals to the state for inclusion but through the intervention of sexual citizens who acted as arbiters of liberal democratic participation of sexuality in public spaces, such as Pride. In Ritchie’s (2010) examination of queer Palestinian exclusions within the Israeli state, he argues, “queer Israelis consolidate their membership in the nation as proper, patriotic citizens by reporting for duty as gatekeepers at a metaphorical checkpoint, where queer Palestinians are inspected, policed, and occasionally admitted into the fold of Israeli gayness” (560). The mobilization of the sexual citizen or normative gay subject as a gatekeeper for proper sexual subjectivity under the neoliberal state is a key feature of articulations of sexual rights under homonationalism. For Puar (2007), homonationalism marks a particularly important way of understanding how contemporary forms of nationalism arrange the conditions of citizenship and produce national threats, such as through the figure of the terrorist. Thus, in contemporary forms of liberal democratic nationalism, “the production of gay and queer bodies is crucial to the deployment of nationalism, insofar as … certain domesticated homosexual bodies provide ammunition to reinforce nationalist projects” (39). This is accomplished, for example, through

131 Throughout QuAIA’s controversy, there have been regular debates in the op-ed sections of printed newspapers and in the comments section of online articles on QuAIA, including in Xtra!, the National Post and the Toronto Star, to name a few.
Orientalist assertions that Western nations, such as Israel, are more advanced and deserving of international support by virtue of the existence of same sex rights within the state.

QuAIA’s Pride controversy marks a series of shifts in both Canadian and Israeli nationalism that posit the newly mobilized sexual citizens as a key figure and actor in defense of the nation. As sexual subjects were both called upon to defend the Israeli state and police the content of the Pride parade, the space of Pride was recast as part of the normative national landscape rather than a space of contestation. As the political history of Toronto’s Pride was obscured by assertions that Pride must be protected from the threat of political encounter, QuAIA became the symbolic terrorist threat to Pride, labeled as hijackers of the parade. Here, the extension of the image of the terrorist to describe QuAIA marks a key feature of how homonationalism newly demarcates the lines of citizenship and belonging in the nation state. For example, Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile’s (2010) work on the history of Canadian surveillance of queers demonstrates that a shift has occurred in the status of sexual subjects under the nation state. Whereas the 1950s to the 80s made queers the target of police violence and state surveillance, the contemporary Pride parade is recast as a site of Canadian normative nationalism whereby the threat of Middle East politics is represented as an invasion or violation of the space of Pride. Furthermore, the normalization of Pride into the national landscape was made clear when debates over QuAIA merged the hetero- and homo-normative publics into a unified voice against political interventions that threaten the nation at Pride. Through interventions in the local and national press, blog postings, political interjections from local politicians like then-mayor Rob Ford, and the lobbying of interest groups such as pro-Israel lobbyists in Canada, Pride became a symbolic space for the playing out of new national anxieties.

Under homonationalism, the nation state (such as Canada or Israel) organizes citizenship, particularly new forms of sexual citizenship, in defense of the state’s violation of human rights.

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132 The word hijack was regularly used by opponents of QuAIA in public debates over Toronto Pride.

133 In these normative assertions against QuAIA in the public realm, Pride’s history of political struggle (Kinsman and Gentile 2010; Warner 2002) was erased. Further, the long history of Palestine solidarity messaging at the Toronto Pride parade and Dyke March was obscured, despite the regular participation of groups such as the Jewish Women’s Committee to End the Occupation, Women in Solidarity with Palestine and Dykes and Trans People for Palestine.
This is accomplished through both an invitation of sexual subjects into the nation state and a call to defend the nation state and its neoliberal values. Sexual subjects who were previously excluded from normative citizenship gain entry into the nation state by acting as “neutral arbiters” (Ritchie 2010, 558; Brown 1995, 27) in sites such as Pride, through the debates over what politics belong at Pride and which rights are congruent with sexual rights. As Gil Hochberg (2010) notes in her introduction to the special GLQ issue on Israel/Palestine, the question of the queer in Israel is inextricably linked to the nationalist project, as we saw with the national mourning over the killing of two queer youth at an LGBT center in Tel Aviv in 2009. Similarly, both Israeli and Canadian nationalisms were at play in Toronto in the banning of the words “Israeli apartheid.”

Under homonationalism, QuAIA marks a threat to both the Israeli state’s public image and new forms of sexual citizenship tied to the image of the nation state as a provider of sexual rights. Sexual citizens in both Canada and Israel were invoked to defend the nation state in the social contract of normative belonging through both the defense of Pride as a space of Canadian belonging and the defense of Israel for its protection of gay rights. Thus, the pull on the neoliberal inclusion of bourgeois gay subjects into the ranks of proper citizenship, while simultaneously, and indeed necessarily, projecting these neoliberal desires onto the transnational landscape of Israel’s liberalizing image, produce a political landscape in Toronto that pits queers critical of Israel as inciting hatred, and neoliberal homosexuals as neutral arbiters in the gauge of sexual liberation. Homonationalism thus discursively rewrites the story of political history and sexual rights at Pride by casting anti-apartheid activists such as QuAIA as threats, neoliberal lesbians and gays as both proper members of the nation and extensions of the state as unbiased judges of liberation and rights, and pro-Israel lobbyists as defenders of freedom against hate by propagating a campaign to claim that criticism of the Israeli state is hateful. In this mix, sexual citizens are turned into experts in diversity, and indeed the banning of “Israel apartheid” was enacted through a claim to defending diversity through the language of comfort. In doing so, the attempts at banning QuAIA effectively produced a narrative of not only neoliberal neutrality but homonational neutrality; whereby sexual rights are objectively separate from concerns over racialized, economic or colonial injustice and the true issue at stake is that of celebration of sexual diversity, or the risk of contaminating and devaluing Pride by hijacking the platform of celebration with the politics of Israel/Palestine.
The neoliberalization of rights discourses, however, requires more than simply a rhetorical slip; it requires representation in order to demonstrate a viable claim to rights language. This is accomplished under multiculturalism through diversity narratives that showcase individuals who have moved from subjugation into neoliberal subjecthood. This process has been extensively analyzed and documented, and I do not aim to review it here. Instead, I propose that we return to a deeper examination of pinkwashing and homonationalism as new formations of this neoliberal project. Israeli pinkwashing functions by showcasing sexual diversity and building an arsenal of representations of sexual equality through forms of sexual citizenship.

Israeli pinkwashing is a potent method through which the terms of Israeli occupation of Palestine are reiterated – Israel is civilised, Palestinians are barbaric, homophobic, and uncivilised. This discourse has manifold effects: … it recruits, often unwittingly, gays and lesbians of other countries into collusion with Israeli violence towards Palestine. (Puar 2011, 138)

Nation states that deploy pinkwashing use sexual citizens in a bid to demonstrate the freedoms of sexual minorities and the presence of legislation that protects and offers rights to its homosexual subjects. Following the representational façade of celebrations of sexual rights, nation states then invite non-queers to parade these gains as arsenal in defense of the state. For instance, in the attempted banning of QuAIA at Toronto Pride, the argument that Israel is an oasis of gay tolerance in the Middle East was regularly mobilized against QuAIA’s participation. That Israel’s policies on sexual rights are different from its policies towards Palestinian rights is concealed through the pinkwashing of the state’s human rights violations. Here, any evidence of sexual rights comes to trump larger concerns over human rights. But why is such a slippage necessary? Why so much effort to have QuAIA banned from Pride if comparable cities in North America seem to have little issue with “Israeli apartheid” messaging in their parades?

Turning to a psychoanalytic reading of anxiety will help us interpret the pervasiveness of efforts to ban QuAIA from Toronto’s Pride. In her book examining the proliferation of nation-state walls, Wendy Brown (2010) argues that walls represent the anxiety attached to the ‘fiction

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134 See feminist scholarship on Canadian multiculturalism, including: Himani Bannerji (1995), Sunera Thobani (2007), and Sherene Razack (2008).
of state sovereignty’ (26) and ‘the waning viability of sovereign nation-states; (34). Extending Brown’s argument on walling, I propose that pro-Israel panics over the term “Israeli apartheid” and mobilizations against QuAIA at Toronto Pride mark a particular site where the nation’s instability must be defended, particularly as the language of sexual rights under Israeli pinkwashing requires the image of Israel as a benevolent provider of sexual rights and beacon of liberal democracy to be maintained. To do so, I examine the relationship of nationalist anxiety in a case study of the attempts to have QuAIA removed from the parade through arbitration.

In 2011, Pride instituted a quasi-legal framework called the Dispute Resolution Process (DRP), governed by the terms of the Ontario Arbitration Act. The DRP was established to act as a binding adjudication process for all parade participants accused of violating the city’s anti-discrimination policy. By June 2012, Pride’s Dispute Resolution Process was invoked for the first time when six complaints were filed against QuAIA in the month leading up to the parade (four individuals and two organizations submitted complaints). Of the six complaints, only B’nai Brith Canada’s complaint went to adjudication via an arbitration panel. The complaints filed against QuAIA all shared the same language: QuAIA violated the city of Toronto’s anti-discrimination policy because of the claim that the term “Israel apartheid” constitutes a form of hate speech.

Brown describes the Freudian notion of defense, as “the means by which the source, content, and energy of the anxiety are repressed” (124), a form of “protecting the ego against ideas that conflict with its notion of itself” (125). In the arbitration against QuAIA at Pride, the precarity of Israel’s public image and its attending nationalist anxieties served as a line of defensive attack. Using discourses of human rights to mobilize a defense of the nation state as an extension of individual rights, the language of discomfort in the complaint against QuAIA reflects a larger shift in the re-scripting of rights discourses under neoliberalism by equating discrimination with feeling offended. This slippage between rights and feelings was heavily mobilized in not only the DRP but also in the overall debates about QuAIA at Pride. QuAIA’s

135 The Dispute Resolution Panel is made up of three officers who are ‘members in good standing with the Law Society of Upper Canada or have relevant professional experience and training in human rights issues, mediation or adjudication. Pride Toronto, Dispute Resolution Process. http://www.pridetoronto.com/festival/dispute-resolution/ (accessed 29 July 2012).
opponents argued that to make Israel’s supporters feel uncomfortable by using the term “Israeli apartheid” was to enact a violation of their rights to be free of discomfort or offense. This process can be examined in the content of several complaints submitted against QuAIA through the DRP by Kulanu\textsuperscript{136} and B’nai Brith Canada,\textsuperscript{137} who argued that QuAIA’s participation in Pride was “offensive” and “divisive.” In other words, these new claims to human rights launched by critics of QuAIA did so under the logic that human rights are constituted by the feeling of diversity and belonging, and that the difficult feelings produced by political confrontation can be equated with hatefulness, a shift made possible through the neoliberal dissolving of systemic critique in the discursive shift towards representational concerns over rights and justice (Mohanty, 986).

In their complaint filed against QuAIA through the DRP, B’nai Brith argued, “Queers Against Israeli Apartheid has led to open expressions of hatred and anti-Semitism against the Jewish State and, by extension, her supporters.”\textsuperscript{138} Here, Israel is personified as a victim who cannot defend “herself,” and the state’s nationalist subjects (both citizens of Israel and Canadian citizens who support Israel) were recruited to defend her. This defense is not simply for the good of the state, but also plays a role in defending Israeli nationalism within Canada, which sustains an exceptional status within the Canadian state at the same time that it is a form of nationalism that cannot properly be attained from within the spatial borders of Canada.\textsuperscript{139} For Brown, these psychic defenses express and gratify the “desire for a national imago of goodness, one that wholly externalizes the nation’s ills and disavows its unlovely effects” (122). Thus, we might understand the unwavering attacks on QuAIA at Pride to be an important part of Israeli nationalism within Canada. Further, that the term “Israeli apartheid” does not elicit the same panic at Pride events in other cities suggests that Toronto’s landscape is a particular space where

\textsuperscript{136} Kulanu. 2012. “Request for Dispute Resolution,” form submitted to Dispute Resolution Process, Pride Toronto. 8 June.


\textsuperscript{139} For instance, Canadian citizens are able to serve in the foreign military of the Israeli Defense Force.
nationalist anxiety plays out. Accordingly, it is not by coincidence that Israel’s rebranding campaign was launched in Toronto in 2008 as a public relations campaign aimed at bolstering a positive image of Israel within the international community.

Lobbying against the term “Israeli apartheid” has also occurred in provincial and municipal government, such as the 2010 condemnation of Israeli Apartheid Week by the Ontario Legislature and the 2012 Toronto City Council condemnation of the words “Israeli apartheid”. Such condemnations are also key sites for understanding how neoliberalism rescripts rights-based discourses. In both cases, the condemnation was an articulation of political opinion rather than an interpretation of human rights or discrimination. Indeed, within legal frames, two Toronto cases dismissed the claim that QuAIA and the terms “Israeli apartheid” were hateful. In 2011, the Toronto city manager issued a report investigating whether the words “Israeli apartheid” violated the city’s anti-discrimination policy or its attending legislation under the Ontario Human Rights Code, and concluded that QuAIA did not violate any policies. In 2012, the Pride Toronto Dispute Resolution Panel’s ruling of the complaint launched by B’nai Brith also concluded that QuAIA did not violate any organizational, municipal, provincial or federal policies.

As Israeli state policies and militarism are increasingly scrutinized both internally and internationally, and the normalization of the term “Israeli apartheid” in everyday speech

144 Both international human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, and Israeli-based organizations, like B’Tselem – the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, have drawn public attention to the Israeli state’s violation of international law and human rights law.
occurs, Israel’s positive image becomes the primary site for maintaining nationalist belonging. To threaten such an image is to destabilize the very terms that constitute neoliberal forms of nationalism that circulate through new modes of sexual citizenship. Projects to defend the Israeli state that attempt to ban and vilify anti-pinkwashing organizing, such as in the case of QuAIA at Pride, are not the only obstacle facing groups organizing in the queer Palestine movement. As rights-based discourses are deployed in the emergence of new modes of sexual citizenship and forms of nationalist attachment structured through homonationalism, the possibilities for solidarity are constrained within both transnational and queer contexts. Homonationalism produces a set of discursive practices\(^\text{145}\) that also structures how transnational solidarity is articulated by consistently returning the gesture of queer solidarity to the question of sexual subjectivity and public visibility of an “out” gay subject. For Puar (2013), this is accomplished through the consistent return to “public visibility, and legislative measures as the dominant barometers of social progress” (338). As such, defense of QuAIA’s right to march in the Pride parade also mobilized a set of discursive techniques shaped by homonationalism, particularly in the deployment of a figure for queer solidarity in the depiction of queer Palestinians.

**Homonationalism and the Token Figure of Solidarity**

Although QuAIA had succeeded in marching in the Pride parade following each attempt to ban the group, these victories remained ambivalent sites of celebration for me. Despite the achievements we had made in setting precedence for the interpretation of anti-discrimination policies, QuAIA’s success came at a cost. I found myself questioning the language we had begun using in our legal defenses, public statements and events. In thinking through QuAIA’s battle at Pride, I came to an unsettling conclusion: that despite our best efforts, we could not remove ourselves from the logics of homonationalism in our attempts at solidarity. The conundrum that homonationalism presents for solidarity brings us to the heart the problem: how do we articulate queer solidarities in an age when sexual rights are already embedded in the nation state? The rise

\(^{145}\) Homonational discursive practices include the use of sexual rights and sexuality to defend the nation state and the neoliberal ideologies of political neutrality that emerge in the normalization of queer sexualities. We find an example of this in the assertion that gay couples are equivalent to heterosexual couples, and should be granted the same privileges under the state through marriage equality.
of the queer Palestine solidarity movement is a product of the dissonance between the above homonational discourses of sexual rights and queer ambivalences towards the nation state. Thus, queer activism in the Palestine solidarity movement is a product of queer distrust of the nation state as benevolent protector of sexual rights, and emerges through a refusal to allow homonational discourses to remain unchallenged. What kind of queer Palestinian subject is produced in QuAIA’s struggle to march at Pride? This question can help us rethink the relationship between desire and risk in our attachments to political belonging in groups.

Duggan (2003) warns that the shifting cultural politics of neoliberalism place left politics at risk (xxi). In the immediate aftermath of the ban, debates about QuAIA’s inclusion were predicated on a particular shift in the discourse of sexual rights and belonging through debates both in support of and in opposition to QuAIA, which focused largely on QuAIA’s right to march in the parade. I highlight the emphasis on QuAIA’s “right” to march as an especially important marker of the shift from liberal rights discourses to neoliberal discourses that exceedingly articulate rights through privatized and individualized logics. As the ban on the term “Israeli apartheid” increasingly centered on QuAIA’s inclusion in the parade, the debate about QuAIA’s right to march redirected the energies of solidarity towards those of inclusion in the parade. Although the ban had catapulted QuAIA to international visibility, and fighting the ban became one of QuAIA’s most successful campaigns, the shift in QuAIA’s messaging from solidarity to anti-censorship raises key concerns over the effects of neoliberal and homonational discourses on solidarity activism.

“Fuck the ban,” became one of the primary slogans QuAIA used in 2010, often in conjunction with an additional message, “PS Israeli Apartheid.” Although the tongue-in-cheek jab this new message offered was both playful and provocative, the “PS” afterthought attached to “Israeli apartheid” is emblematic of an insidious aspect of homonationalism often overlooked in Puar’s argument; homonationalism, she argues, makes even resistant frameworks “accomplices of certain normativizing violences” (2007, 24). The slippage towards inclusion in the parade embedded QuAIA’s gestures of solidarity in the conditions of homonationalism, which were deployed through the exceptionalism of queer inclusion at Pride. This in turn eclipsed QuAIA’s solidarity message by redirecting public debate away from a critique of Israeli state practices towards an appeal to QuAIA’s rightful place in the parade. Despite the radical demand against censorship that the fight against the ban inspired, and without diminishing the important
successes of QuAIA to rescind the ban, I highlight this example in order to carefully consider how gestures of solidarity in oppositional politics can be distorted, coopted, or clouded by contemporary neoliberal logics, particularly those shaped by homonationalism.

Homonationalism structures the way both neoliberal forms of rights discourses and new modes of sexual subjectivity and citizenship are deployed. Not only is the neoliberal nation state defended through homonational discursive practices, we also find the expansion of the nation state through war, free trade and militarism, and the increasing securitization of the nation state through border policies, national security, deportation, incarceration and detention. In Canada, where homonationalism is embedded in Middle East foreign policies and new immigration practices domestically, the role of homonational sexual citizenship in the project of upholding the violent practices of the nation state is increasingly apparent. Homonationalism thus recodes sexual subjectivities into “‘good’ forms of national kinship (monogamous, consumptive, privatized) while punishing those that fall outside of them, particularly those forms of racialized and classed kinship that continue to be the target of state violence and pathology” (Agathangelou et al. 2008, 122). Although Puar (2013) argues against this interpretive use of homonationalism to define the distinction between good and bad subjects, we cannot escape the fact that like neoliberalism, homonationalism is an ideological formation that produces new subjectivities in keeping with the hegemonic dualities of our times. The strength of the critique of homonationalism is its capacity to expand on our understanding of the circulation of power formations beyond those of identity alone; thus, sexual rights are not simply about expanding equality – they can be mobilized to serve hegemonic power.

Under the guise of defending sexual rights, homonationalism makes critiques of state violence, such as the critique of Israeli state practices, unintelligible. For example, QuAIA’s critics argue: how can you call Israel an apartheid state when it is the only place where gay rights are protected in the Middle East? The dissonance between critiques of state violence and the

\[146\] Among the many allies who supported QuAIA’s right to march, the most notable was the formation of a new coalition, the Pride Coalition for Free Speech, which marched with QuAIA in the 2010 parade.

\[147\] I have briefly outlined some Canadian forms of homonationalism elsewhere (Kouri-Towe 2012), but direct the reader to see Melissa Autumn White’s (2013) work, which examines homonationalism in same-sex family class migration in Canada.
discourses used to defend rights under neoliberalism obscure the mechanisms of homonationalism at play, which have transformed sexual rights into the project of modern nationalisms. In the Canadian, U.S. and Israeli state practices that I touch on here, homonationalism ushers liberal rights and the promise of economic mobility back into the nation state (from the free market) by redirecting the desire for inclusion and recognition into what Mohanty (2013) calls the “privatization and domestication of social justice commitments” (986). As such, homonationalism produces new forms of sexual citizenship embedded in the interests of the nation state; further, it alters discourses of sexual rights, which shift from claims in opposition to the nation state’s violent practices to seeking inclusion and recognition within the nation state. The remaking of the nation state as a benevolent figure granting rights not only changes the relationship of sexual subjects to the nation, it also impacts how oppositional discourses make justice claims.

In QuAIA’s case, the slippage into homonational discourse placed the group’s gestures of solidarity at risk most pressingly in the years subsequent to the ban of the term “Israel apartheid.” After the ban was rescinded and QuAIA was allowed to march in the 2010 parade, lobbyists changed their tactics to try to have QuAIA removed from the parade. Turning to the city of Toronto’s anti-discrimination policy, both lobbyists and municipal politicians attempted to use human rights policies to revoke municipal funding of Pride if QuAIA marched again in 2011. Despite the report that concluded that the words “Israeli apartheid” did not violate the city’s anti-discrimination policy, politicians and lobbyists continued to pressure Pride to ban QuAIA again. The shift from Pride as a site of contested belonging in the 2010 ban to the restructuring of Pride through the DRP as an extension of the state in the 2012 complaints filed against QuAIA, marks an important moment in the changes to both sexual subjectivities and the nation state under homonationalism. The implementation of the DRP constituted Pride as a proxy of the judicial process, and Pride’s arbitration panel was called upon to interpret and adjudicate the city of Toronto’s anti-discrimination policy and the Ontario Human Rights Code. Whereas appeals to sexual rights constituted a form of sexual citizenship, the exercise of rights adjudication in the DRP was an archetype of homonationalism.

As QuAIA’s opponents increasingly articulated the problem of the term “Israeli apartheid” as a violation of the rights of supporters of the Israeli state to feel included, a new form of sexual subjectivity emerged at Pride, which produced a form of erasure of Palestinian
subjectivity. While supporters of Israel were presented as injured by the bad feelings of QuAIA’s message, the absence of a Palestinian subject to claim an equivalent injury in the parade made Palestinian subjectivity unrecognizable without a representable figure. That Palestinians may experience bad feelings through the prominence of Israeli state nationalism in the space of the parade, with Israeli flags and posters celebrating Israel as a world leader in human rights, was unintelligible to a discursive terrain that required a visible subject. The elision of Palestinian subjectivity in this case was predicated on neoliberal models of diversity that require representational visibility for articulating new forms of subjectivity or belonging. Thus, the logics of homonationalism in this example make legible only the supporters of Israel as recognizable injured parties through QuAIA’s messaging.

National recognition of sexual rights requires a visible, out, sexual subject. The neoliberal sexual citizen is structured through narratives of gay liberation that are based on white, male and gay sexual subjectivities. As visibility becomes the model for sexual citizenship, only those sexual subjects who mirror this model are granted recognition within the nation state, or in spaces like Pride. According to Amal Amireh (2010), Palestinian queers are marked by two extremes in representation, hypervisibility and invisibility, which are deployed in the showcasing of Palestinian victimization at the hands of Arab society and delegitimized when critiquing the Israeli state (636). This paradox of Palestinian visibility was mirrored in the controversy over QuAIA at Pride as the figure of the queer Palestinian as the subject of QuAIA’s solidarity remained a central – yet invisible – presence.

Like Amireh’s articulation of the paradox of queer Palestinian visibility within Israeli narratives, the figure of the queer Palestinian at Pride was called upon to defend QuAIA’s use of the term “Israeli apartheid.” In the comments section of news articles and in public debate, people consistently called upon QuAIA to provide a queer Palestinian subject to serve as evidence of the legitimacy of QuAIA’s message and role at Pride. That the message of “Israeli apartheid” was not predicated on a sexual subject was irrelevant in these debates, since homonationalism and new forms of sexual citizenship required a proper sexual subject to articulate sexual rights claims. Here we find another neoliberal trap, as rights claims must be articulated through a viable sexual subject recognizable to the nation state. Since a critique of “Israeli apartheid” requires no citizen subject, it becomes an unrecognizable claim under neoliberal logics that place rights in the realm of the individual citizen subject – or in the case of
homonationalism, the individual sexual citizen. Here we find the most urgent problem for queer solidarity, as the very logics of neoliberalism and homonationalism require the production and performance of legible sexual subjectivity. The call for evidence evoked throughout the debates on QuAIA and “Israeli apartheid” did not emerge as a reflection of the actual practices and politics of Palestinian queer activists (in groups such as PQBDS, ASWAT and alQaws), but from an expectation to speak to the very terms of homonational and neoliberal belonging that constituted the erasure of Palestinian subjectivity from the start. Thus, in order to be legible in its gesture of queer solidarity, QuAIA was compelled to speak for queer Palestinians as evidence of the legitimacy of the group and the term “Israeli apartheid.” Here, we find the paradox produced by neoliberal triangulation – the simultaneous requirement to contest the terms of expulsion, which embeds that contestation in the reinforcement of the very logics being contested.

What happens when queer gestures of solidarity require token figures of Palestinian subjects to stand in for legibility under the conditions of homonational sexual citizenship? Under the terms of homonationalism, rights claims are only recognizable to the apparatus of sexual citizenship through the visible sexual subject as an individual member of the nation state. Thus, the mobilization of the figure of the queer Palestinian is both necessary and deeply troubling, as it offers transformative possibility simultaneously as it pulls the gesture of solidarity back into the terms of homonationalism via a recognizable out gay Palestinian subject. Nayrouz Abu Hatoum (2013) argues that this process places a burden on queer Palestinians by reducing the Palestinian liberation struggle to solidarity exclusively with figures of politicized queer Palestinians made legible to an international audience and dehistoricized from local struggles. Abu Hatoum’s critique of queer Palestine activism, which I discussed in Chapter 2, exposes an ethical concern over the gestures of solidarity from North American activists, since these gestures impact how Palestinian activism is recognized and enacted both locally and globally.

The Ethics of Risk: Attachments and Adaptation Under Neoliberalism and Homonationalism

Queer solidarity, such as in QuAIA’s message against apartheid and anti-pinkwashing campaigns, requires a consideration over the ethics of visibility and representation in negotiating transnational solidarity in the context of homonationalism. Despite the focus of QuAIA’s critique
of Israeli state practices, the discursive expectation to produce a visible queer Palestinian figure to justify QuAIA’s intervention was embedded in a homonational reliance on representational models of visibility for sexual subjectivity, which risked producing queer Palestinians as token native informants. Reflecting back on QuAIA’s strategy, I wonder how transnational solidarity activists might deploy their political interventions without reproducing token figures to be in solidarity with? This question requires some reflection on the terms of solidarity, the mobilization of figures in solidarity movements, and the fragile line between maneuvering across homonational and neoliberal logics and building viable political platforms for queer solidarity. These are principally concerns over the strategies of social movements and the adaptability of movements to change. More than simply a question of how to do better activism, these are pressing concerns for the ethics of transnational solidarity under neoliberalism.

Gada Mahrouse (2008) argues in her work on photographic practices of witnessing in international solidarity activism that the white/Western liberal desire to mediate the suffering of others risks reinstating unequal power relations in empathetic representation (89). Although Mahrouse speaks to the considerations of anti-racist practice in international solidarity (99), I propose that her concerns also map across the geopolitical landscape of transnational solidarity beyond whiteness alone. Through the neoliberalizing frameworks of sexual citizenship, queer solidarity activism is also at risk of a similar ethical dilemma in the representation of queer Palestinians. If homonationalism produces a discursive and ideological landscape where the bodies of sexual citizens are used to defend the nation state, we need to consider what it means to mobilize those same bodies in defense of solidarity activism. Can we talk about sexuality and human rights without upholding the normalization of sexual citizenship?

When solidarity activists, such as those of us in QuAIA, were called upon to defend our interventions by demonstrating the reality of the suffering of others through visible and recognizable forms of sexual citizenship, we find ourselves in a paradox. If we refuse the terms of homonational discourse, we remove ourselves completely from the landscape of public debate, since hegemonic discourses shape the legibility of all speech acts. This does not mean

\[148\] Examples of homonational deployments of sexual citizens include discourses that depict queer Israelis as liberated by the nation, queer Palestinians as oppressed by a homophobic Palestinian society, and queer internationals as neutral arbiters in the barometer of proper sexual citizenship.
that queer solidarity must necessarily tokenize, since the leadership and agency of queer Palestinian activism remains a central force within the movement; rather, I argue that we must consider strategy and adaptation in conjunction with risk – especially the risk of tokenization – because all gestures of solidarity are structured by the discursive fields of neoliberalism and homonationalism in our present moment. Thus, as Puar (2013) reminds us, there is no escape from homonationalism, although we can resist it and re-signify its parameters (336). What would it mean to re-signify homonationalism in the gesture of solidarity? Puar does not answer this question herself, however I argue that it would involve strategically deploying discourses of rights while also suspending an attachment to those very rights. This is a tricky and risky line to follow in social movement practices, especially because activists are caught up in our own attachments to belonging in social movements (i.e. we want to be good solidarity activists).

Queer solidarities need critical approaches for engaging in discourses of sexual rights, since the slip from resistance and re-signification into reinforcement of homonationalism is deceptively easy. As Agathangelou et al. (2008) argue, the seduction into what they call “global lockdown” risks “reproducing the racialized and sexualized economies of benevolence and exploitation that fortify so much of conservative, liberal, and even radical praxis” (137). By speaking exclusively to the language of visibility structured by neoliberalism, queer solidarity risks mirroring the value systems attached to homonationalism by employing the very logics of visibility in the search of a proper queer subject to stand in solidarity with. In the case of queer Palestine solidarity activism, the risk of fictionalization threatens to reinforce the imperializing discourses of Palestinian victimization constitutive of Massad’s (2007) “Gay International,” which he argues mobilizes sexuality through the civilizational impulses of mapping a legible sexual subjectivity onto the other. However, not all deployments of queer politics serve imperialism, as evidenced by the decolonizing politics of groups such as PQBDS, which trouble Massad’s assertion that all forms of sexual identity within the Muslim and Arab world are complicit with the imperial intervention of the “Gay International” in the region (163).

Transnational solidarities require activists to build strategically around extended figures and competing interests. Strategic deployment, like in the case of the figure of the queer Palestinian in debates at Toronto Pride, can be risky because of the ease with which such gestures can reinforce homonational ideologies; however, these strategies can also be effective tools of re-signification as the language of visibility can reconstitute the parameters of spaces
like Pride. Because of the inherent contradictions in homonationalism, which relies on both liberal (i.e. rights discourses) and neoliberal logics (i.e. individualism, privatization, free market), these competing ideologies can be used strategically to undermine the discursive power of homonationalism. Thus, we need to not shy away from the question of risk if we can make risk central to our strategic adaptation to shifting political landscapes.

Queer solidarity requires a negotiation between trepidation and mobilizing, a weighing of risk versus strategy. This is especially true if we are to take seriously the call for boycott, divestment and sanctions from Palestinian civil society in 2005 and PQBDS in 2010, since to boycott gay tourism requires speaking in the very language of neoliberalism (i.e. consumer choice, tourism and travel, consumption of culture). If queer solidarities are trapped by the simultaneous requirement to speak to the logics of neoliberal inclusion and stand in contestation of those logics, then we must consider where the line between strategy and cooption can be effectively negotiated. The strength of queer solidarity lies in its capacity to intervene in neoliberal visibility and resist homonationalism by refusing to reduce the gesture of solidarity to the celebration of sexual rights more simply. Queer solidarity is important for the Palestine solidarity movement precisely because it resists homonational discourses that deploy sexual rights to serve the nation state, and intervene in the increasingly discursive techniques used by contemporary nation states to justify violence. While the “Gay International” may seek to liberate the figure of the queer Palestinian from homophobia, queer solidarity groups such as QuAIA must intervene in spaces like Pride as a tactical intervention into the homonational shifts in articulations of queer subjectivity that are deployed in the celebration of the nation state as provider of sexual freedom.

The line between strategy and risk must be negotiated by an ethical investment in diligently suspending the call on queer Palestinians to act as native informants for solidarity work. Instead, solidarity activists must challenge the homonational call for representational visibility by intervening in claims for justice while simultaneously supporting localized struggles against sexuality and gender-based oppressions. This means that queer solidarity requires a dual practice of suspending the call for token visibility in discourses of sexual rights and contesting the cooption of those rights in homonational discourses by returning to the material conditions of injustice and asymmetry. Such an approach promises to flip the neoliberal concern for inclusion back into the politics of contestation, returning queer subjectivities to the site of collective
struggle. Looking back at the gains QuAIA made along with allies at Pride, the negotiation and adaptation of strategy did work to not only secure QuAIA’s place in the parade, but also to bring to the forefront the politics of Palestine/Israel, Israeli pinkwashing practices, Canadian-based examples of homonationalism and pinkwashing, and a return in public discourse to Pride’s roots in political protest. Indeed, during the same period that QuAIA fought against the attempts to ban the group from the parade, a number of new groups emerged in Toronto that resuscitated the political origins of the Pride march. Although QuAIA succeeded in upholding the right to march in the parade, one of its less obviously successes can be found in its role in disrupting and unsettling the normalization of homonationalism at Pride. By contesting the limits of neoliberal rights, QuAIA helped reveal the discursive appropriations that underscored the erosion of collective projects for social change in Toronto.

Perhaps what is less clear is how QuAIA brought to the surface concerns over the ethics of transnational solidarity. Discourses of sexual citizenship and liberation that simply call for queer Palestinian inclusion fail to recognize that the system of apartheid – through the separation walls, checkpoints, surveillance, detentions, and systemic racism – mark a material form of exclusion that precludes neoliberal rights claims. “Rather than fight for social tolerance or acceptance, many queer Palestinian activists aim to instigate a movement for a radical social change” (Ritchie, 568). As QuAIA insisted on upholding the group’s critique of Israeli state practices in the term “Israeli apartheid,” it obliged the public to contend with the contradictions in celebrating sexual rights simultaneous to the discarding of Palestinian human rights. Thus, the ethics of queer solidarity involves adapting to the political landscape and finding ways of unraveling the coherence, strength and power of homonational discourse, even at the same time that such gestures risk producing token Palestinians whose rights are suggestively violated through the ban on “Israeli apartheid.”

It is no longer enough to simply oppose war and occupation or fight for gay rights, activists today must develop sophisticated analyses of the nuanced discursive shifts that have

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149 QuAIA’s work in Israeli pinkwashing also brought into dialogue Canadian pinkwashing of the Tar Sands and Breast Cancer campaigns in an event QuAIA held in June 2012.

150 This includes the alternative Dyke march “Take Back the Dyke” in 2010, and “Stonewall TO” in 2011, the formation of a coalition in 2012 called Queers for Social Justice, and an annual “Night March” starting in 2012.
undermined and divided social movements in the late 20th century. In the case of Israeli pinkwashing, queer solidarities are necessary in order to intervene in the justification of state violence using homonational discourses of sexual rights and state security. Intervening in the cooption and slippages of activist gestures into the logics of domination structured by neoliberalism and homonationalism is a vital component of contemporary queer solidarity activism. Despite the good intentions of solidarity, however, the critiques of homonationalism I have presented reveal how easily activist energies can be redirected into projects that bolster injustices. In QuAIA’s case at Pride, gestures of solidarity were at risk of being redirected to uphold the sexual exceptionalism of Canadian society in the demand for token Palestinian queer visibility. Further, to give in to this demand would also uphold the very logics used by Israeli pinkwashing. If we do not consider how neoliberal and homonational logics can easily distort activism, then gestures of queer solidarity risk serving the same projects as contemporary nationalism.

In a landscape of political contestation governed by the risk of cooption into hegemonic power, how do we sustain the survival of a social movement? This is a difficult question for those of us working on solidarity, since if we take seriously the challenge of strategy versus risk, then we must consider that survival may mean letting go of our attachments. After each iteration of QuAIA’s battle to march in the parade concluded in victory, the cyclical contestation and defense of QuAIA’s right to march slowly became the group’s main focus. Increasingly, we celebrated our victories at Pride. In 2014, as Toronto hosted World Pride – a neoliberal gay tourism platform under the auspices of global gay rights – QuAIA’s plan to march left me with many concerns. Were we serving our commitment to solidarity by marching in World Pride, or had we become so attached to our battle at Pride that we could not distinguish between our solidarity and our attachment? To my mind, this was a turning point in our work on queer Palestine solidarity activism, and I increasingly began to think of World Pride as a sign that QuAIA had served its purpose and was at risk of continuing only in order to serve its own existence.

To kill a group that one is part of may be interpreted as a violent act, a premature death. However, Phillips’ (2000) work on death stories suggests that the drive to die on one’s own terms can be a powerful tool of transformation – one that emphasizes transience over perfection (115). When we choose our own death, we make possible the survival of something beyond our own
desires and attachments; in Phillips’ work on Darwin’s theory of evolution, this ensures “the survival of the species and the death of the individual” (10). If we think of QuAIA’s retirement as the reorganization of attachments and an adaptation to the political landscape, then the death of the group may be a site of hopeful possibility, of success through a commitment to transience. This involves both celebrating the achievements and hopeful possibilities of social movements, and also the site of possible risk or failure. By failure, I mean not simply the failed events, the closing of groups like QuAIA, or other sites of activist deceleration, but rather complicating our notions of failure to attend to the generative possibilities of what can happen to our solidarities when we begin to liberate them from our attachments – that our attachments fail our intentions. This opens us to both an examination of risk in the shaping of our attachments and desires by neoliberalism and a consideration over the risk of becoming stubborn in our attachments to groups.

Phillips argues that mourning loss is necessary for our capacity to move on, to restore our appetites for the possibility of life beyond the present (28). To have any hope for the future, we need to be open to the transient relationship between our own desires and the adaptability of our attachments. If our attachments become rigid, if we identify too much with the group, then we risk undoing the transformative potential of social movements. In the case of QuAIA, the unconscious desires to do good and to be good risk the capacity of the group’s actions to accomplish the transformative potential it desires. Caught between a rock and a hard place, the risk inherent in organizing under homonationalism is evidence of the need to introduce adaptation into the language of politics of solidarity and resistance. Because neoliberalism and homonationalism requires us to speak in their terms, our social movements are at risk when our attachments and desire in the name of solidarity reinforce rather than re-signify these power formations. This is not an exceptional risk; none of us can escape the hegemony of neoliberalism or homonationalism. However, bringing attentiveness to the risk of ruling ideologies and an awareness of how our attachments can reinforce power systems can help us to adapt to something new.

Examining the neoliberal and homonational discourses that underlie contestations over the politics of inclusion at the Toronto Pride parade, this chapter critically examined how queer solidarities can be constrained by the circulation of hegemonic discourses that risk embedding gestures of solidarity into neoliberal, homonalional and imperializing logics. As Agathangelou et
al. (2008) warn, neoliberalism redirects energies for justice “away from building solidarities” and fixes those energies “on individualized solutions … fueling the (re)production of neoliberal, neoconservative, homonormative, and ultimately heteronormative worlds” (137). The urgency of interrogating how solidarity is articulated in a political landscape dominated by homonational logics is not simply a tactic of interruption, but fundamentally a concern over how to build effective oppositional strategies in a context where those efforts are so easily redirected towards the very projects activists aim to transform. At times, this may involve taking initiative to open our social movements up to new strategies, new attachments, new desires by killing off our attachments to the things we desire most – to belong to a group that makes us feel good about ourselves. This is a commitment to transience – to suspending our attachments in order to make space for other futures, other stories, other strategies and adaptations. In the words of QuAIA Toronto member Tim McCaskell, “we decided that retiring QuAIA allows us all to develop new strategies for supporting the Palestine solidarity movement and to make new links across oppressions in our communities.”

Chapter 4

Adaptation and Transformation: Queerness, Affect and the Activist Imaginary

"even with an image of a better good life available to sustain your optimism, it is awkward and it is threatening to detach from what is already not working"

— Lauren Berlant

How do we sustain our political imaginaries when faced with the weight of risk under neoliberalism and homonationalism? In the previous chapter, I looked at the choice QuAIA Toronto made to retire the group as a sign of possibility for the future. However, when confronted with activist depression, how do we regain the appetite for life other than by killing a group to make room for something new? Our capacity to imagine social and political transformation requires both optimism for “a better good life” (Berlant 2011, 263) and a commitment to something different, what Phillips (2000) calls transience. For Berlant, the desire for the political is cruel, however such an attachment is not without hope. She argues for the possibility of political attachment through a simultaneous move of “not reentering the normative public sphere while seeking a way, nonetheless, to maintain … desire for the political” (230). Suspending our attachments while we make room for change is not a form of betrayal or detachment; instead, it is a commitment to holding out for the hope of some other way of cultivating our political imaginaries when our current models fail us. For instance, when the call for queer solidarity requires that we bring forth a viable neoliberal sexual subject to defend our politics, we need to be able to shift our attachments to the terms of solidarity in order to attend to the risk of neoliberal tokenization. In short, we need to adapt our political imaginaries to the shifting conditions of life under neoliberalism and homonationalism.

Transformation is not simply a revolutionary process; it is a texture of life that structures our circulation through social and political fields in both revolutionary and mundane ways.

152 Ann Cvetkovich (2011) refers to the state of depression facing Left-politics (170).
Sometimes our political projects bring about big changes, but we cannot feed our commitments to social and political transformation on revolutions alone. There are immediate, quotidian, and small-scale transformations that make up the everyday practices of activism that I want to turn to for thinking about the sustainability and adaptability of social movements. This involves suspending our attachments to linear narratives of progress and turning instead to a textured reading of activism. Inspired by the transient possibility, and even optimism, offered by two emergent fields, queer theory and affect studies,¹⁵³ I propose that we can recuperate solidarity from the risks of our times if we cultivate attachments that are more adaptable, more fluid, and less rigid.

Although I am resistant to prescriptions for activism, my attachment to practices of solidarity compels me as both an activist and scholar to offer an approach, rather than a script, rethinking solidarity. This task is pressing, not least because despite attempts to recuperate the political from our failed optimism for revolutionary change, it remains difficult for us to think and talk about justice in the everyday practices of social movements and activism beyond the scripts of revolutionary. Berlant concludes her book, *Cruel Optimism*, by suggesting that there is urgency “to reinvent … new idioms of the political, and of belonging itself” (262). But how do we accomplish such a re-visioning while our capacity to imagine is embedded in our attachments? 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 texture of activism is to turn our attention in transformational politics towards the everyday movements of activist practices. I begin this chapter 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

¹⁵³ Queer theory and affect studies are fields emergent from feminist, psychoanalytic, phenomenological and poststructural theorizing; these fields are troubled with binary thinking, such as the dichotomy of normative gender and sexuality or the split between the mind and body.
examining how affect can attend to transformation, and propose some considerations for the everyday work of 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 mobilized 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 transforming in order to alleviate injustice?

The problem of binary thinking is not simply an intellectual concern, but primarily a concern for 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. As Duggan argues (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 et al. 2008, 137).
If neoliberal cooptions of oppositional politics rescript liberatory projects into the very folds of global capitalism, as Agathangelou et al. 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 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 argues that these approaches to critique continue to rely on dualistic logics, which are only capable of imagining possibility in fantasies of egalitarianism. Instead, Sedgwick 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 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 must recognize how the discursive field of identity shapes reality, and respond through nondualistic approaches to understanding subjectivity, agency and change (12). Sedgwick 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 narratives 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.

What I mean by mundane victory is the small-scale achievement or shift that emerges through social movement practices, whereby an aspect of everyday life, a discursive trope, or a facet of institutional structures is transformed. One example of this type of mundane victory comes out of the controversy over QuAIA at Toronto Pride, which I examine at length in the previous chapter. While the conflict over the term *Israeli apartheid* certainly included major successes, these successes centered on the shifts in discourse around Palestine/Israel and sexual rights in Toronto, interpretations of municipal anti-discrimination policies, and the role of politics in public spaces like Pride. These transformations, which are not themselves revolutionary, are nonetheless important shifts that resonate across discursive social and political fields. Traditional models of social change are generated around the revolutionary shifts and changes in society – the overthrow of a corrupt government, the introduction of a new model of governance, the dismantling of an oppressive system, the redistribution of resources, etc. However, what frameworks do we have to attend to these mundane victories? I turn to queer and affect theories to provide some of the framework for interpreting the space beside revolutionary
moments in social movement practices, which open up to the middle range of agency 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. As fields on the margins, outside of traditional disciplines, affect studies and queer theory offer new interpretative tools for thinking about social change. They are fields that attend to both the individual and the collective, while neither reducing one to the other, nor imagining them as discrete.\(^\text{154}\) 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’ 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 & 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, “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 argues “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

\(^{154}\) 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.
always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes” (1993, 19). Thus, queerness offers an adaptive analytic tool for understanding both human subjectivities and political identities – as the continuous reinvention of who or what is queer keeps it elusive.\textsuperscript{155} 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 frameworks situated \textit{beside} normative systems and \textit{across} the middle ranges of agency. Beyond the theoretical implications of a textured reading, however, I am interested in how we can interpret the practices of solidarity in the queer Palestine movement as modeling the adaptive capacity of a textured approach.

\section*{Queer Solidarity \& Transformative Futures}

The spatial and temporal dimensions of queerness, and queer activism in particular, orient political attachments in queer solidarity to the limits of belonging within the hetero-patriarchal structures governing life under the neoliberal nation state, particularly as the techniques of neoliberal governance increasingly mobilize homonationalism in early 21\textsuperscript{st} century practices of governance and public and international relations. Queerness intervenes in the normative trajectory of progress scripted into the fabric of contemporary capitalist (i.e. neoliberal) organization of labour, the family, nationalism and citizenship (Dinshaw \textit{et al.} 2007).\textsuperscript{156} For José Muñoz, queerness’ temporality is located in the realm of futurity, and he offers queer futurity as the possibility of utopia, which he imagines as necessary for political struggle.\textsuperscript{157} Muñoz

\textsuperscript{155} I am arguing against the idea of queer as a stable category here, despite the popularization of queer used as a sexual identity category (i.e. LGBTQ), queer theory and the quick pace of changing queer identities (e.g. butches, bears, femme sharks, otters, etc.) has kept queer much more elusive and adaptable than the dichotomous identities of gay/straight or butch/femme.

\textsuperscript{156} Scholarship on queer temporality examines the relationships of hetero-patriarchal temporality via the family, reproduction, and the state (Halberstam 2005; Muñoz 2009), and the engages in psychoanalytic notions of futurity that center on subject formation and desire (Edelman 2004; Grosz 1995).

\textsuperscript{157} Muñoz’s turn to utopia and futurity is partially a response to Edelman’s (2004) rejection of a queer future.
suggests that queerness allows us to see and feel beyond the present (2009, 1), queerness is a potentiality (21), a possibility for reconfiguring the future differently from the present. The appeal of utopian visioning clearly opens up a space of hope for the political imaginary, however there is something about the temporality of queer futurity that exceeds my own capacity to adapt political practices to the transformational projects of the present. Embedded within the daily tensions and practices of activism, the temporality of utopian futures is too far an extension for imagining the texture of solidarity. When we consider that our political gestures and relations of solidarity today may require that we abandon a utopian vision in favour of a strategic or pragmatic interest, a commitment to queer futurity risks interpreting such practices as betrayal. What does the fantasy of utopia hold if we have other interpretive tools for holding onto the possibility of queerness’ ambivalence? Is utopia necessary for our capacity to imagine the world differently?

Within the realm of social movement practices, utopia is a risky model for visioning the political, not least because it risks romanticizing queerness without considering the way our desires for the future and political imaginaries can be caught up in the web of neoliberalism. Butler (1993) argues, “what we might call ‘agency’ or ‘freedom’ or ‘possibility’ is always a specific political prerogative that is produced by the gaps opened up in regulatory norms, in the interpellating work of such norms, in the process of their self-repetition. Freedom, possibility, agency do not have an abstract or pre-social status, but are always negotiated within a matrix of power” (22). How we imagine and enact transformative possibilities in gestures of solidarity must therefore attend to the conditions shaping our very desires for change in each moment. This temporal closeness is important if we want to attend to the shifts of relations of power that accompany the adaptability of neoliberalism. If the purpose of social movements is to invite us into the imagining of different futures, a textured approach to queer solidarity must therefore be responsive to adaptation – to the disruptions and reconfigurations of our current relations – rather than the promise of a radically different utopian future. This is not to say that we can never live beyond our current circumstances, rather I am proposing that in order for us to imagine beyond

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Muñoz further argues, “straight time tells us there is no future but the here and now of our everyday life. The only futurity promised is that of reproductive majoritarian heterosexuality, the spectacle of the state refurbishing its ranks through overt and subsidized acts of reproduction” (22).
our current symbolic order, or even to produce a new symbolic order, we must balance between our radical desires and our capacities within the current matrix of power. Thus, with each transformative iteration that accompanies the political process, the terms of our symbolic order change.\footnote{Consequently, queerness itself changes with our shifting social and political worlds. Critiques of homonormativity and homonationalism are clear evidence of this.}

We can interpret the textured practices of solidarity as adaptive rather than utopian in the queer Palestine movement. Converging with Palestine-based queer and sexual rights organizations such as ASWAT, alQaws, Pinkwatching Israel and PQBDS, and transnational queer solidarity groups such as the various QuAIA groups across North America. The discursive techniques of this movement – particularly in the movement’s focus on pinkwashing practices and critiques of homonationalism – foreground a textured approach to activism, which uncouples the success of social movements from utopian futures of liberated subjects of solidarity. The transnational aspect of this movement – as gestured to in the cross-bordered geography of the concept – further lends itself to a textured model as a middle range or in-between of geo-social relationality. 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.\footnote{Jenny Burman’s work on transnational yearning has informed this reading of transnational social movements. She argues, “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” (2010, 8).}

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 \textit{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 through the meetings of the \textit{Queer Visions} gathering, I argue that we should turn to these moments in social movement building as key sites for imaging transformational possibilities in textured terms. 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: 1) by side stepping the logics of inclusion, 2) through a push towards the heterogeneity and multiplicity of struggles in movement building, 3) by re-visioning transformation beyond the structures of our current social order, and 4) 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. In her presentation at the World Social Forum, Haneen Maikey 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.” 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. 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

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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.” 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 has described as the neoliberalization of gay rights movements emblematic of homonormativity (2002, 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 solidarity 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 examining 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, 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. 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 within the larger Palestine-solidarity and liberation movements through patriarchal and heteronormative nationalisms that place burdens of reproductive futurity 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.” 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 for 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

166 Queer Visions. General Assembly Declaration.
and dominant discourses in social movements. Critiques of homonationalism are particularly important here because they help us understand how the power of hegemonic adaptability reconfigures identifications through affective dimensions. 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 et al. have suggested, the impulse to be seduced into the fold of hegemonic systems is at play in sexual rights movements, and 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 movement building and the flexibility of what Sedgwick calls the middle ranges – of desiring, twisting, attracting, and 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

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167 See Chapter 3 for detailed overview of homonationalism.
the world. Affect theory is an emergent field of critical analysis organized loosely along two trajectories. First, through Spinoza and the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), affect theory developed philosophically as a field, particularly in the work of Massumi (1987, 2002) and Grosz (2008). In this stream, affect offers another framework for thinking about social configurations and relationality. The second trajectory follows the work of psychologist Silvan Tomkins, and has been most notably developed through Sedgwick’s work (2003). In this second stream, affect is examined more explicitly in the process of subject formation and attends to the relationship between the subject and others, as well as the world of encounter.\textsuperscript{168} Drawing on both these lineages, I am interested in how affect theory raises questions about what roots us in belonging, at the same time that it contends with 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 asks us to think non-dualistically, to look to the in-between of repression-versus-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, Deleuze and Guattari 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 \textit{nomadic}\textsuperscript{169} approach to thought, attentive to multiplicity and heterogeneity. In social movement practices, the in-between and heterogeneous qualities of activism are not the result of major movement victories, but of the mundane dimensions of

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{168} Beyond these two camps, affect has also been taken up in theories of emotion (Ahmed 2000 & 2004), psychoanalytic approaches to feeling (Ngai 2005), and as a biosocial process (Brennan 2004).
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\textsuperscript{169} Deleuze and Guattari 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.
\end{flushright}
transformational projects in everyday life. 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.

In collaboration with emotion, affect attends to the psychic and social circulation of feelings in response to encounters. Here, affects accompany emotional registers like hate, rage, anger, love, and happiness, and 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, on the other hand, distinguishes affects from feelings more explicitly. For Brennan, feelings are “sensations that have found the right match in words” (2004, 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).

In the Spinozan lineage, affect is used for its gesture towards emergence and intensity. For 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. This 
emergent quality of affect, an intensity that moves us, interests me for thinking about the 
transformative processes of social movement practices. In this way, affect facilitates our ability 
to imagine life beyond dualism. Building on Deleuze & Guattari, Massumi 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 consciousness (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 affective relationship between 
encounter and transformation. Take the case of QuAIA Toronto’s controversy over the use of the 
term “Israeli apartheid” that I examined in the previous chapter. A textured reading of this case 
reveals a different set of questions that we might pose of a social movement. Whereas a binary 
model would look at the attempts to ban QuAIA and the ensuing victories thwarting these 
attempts as an example of repression and activist victory, a textured approach considers what 
shifts and changes resonate between these moments of intensity. Our reading not only impacts 
our interpretation of victories and failures, but also alters the very way we approach 
transformational projects. Whereas QuAIA may have succeeded at defending its right to march 
in the parade, a textured interpretation would see victory elsewhere – in the shift in discourses of 
belonging in the parade and disruption of the normalization of Israeli state practices in 
pinkwashing. These types of transformations are hard to recognize and go unnoticed if we keep 
looking for revolutionary gestures, but if we are attuned to the shifts and subtleties of what
Sedgwick refers to as the middle range, we can see these dimensions of social change as having an important transformational impact on everyday life. In this case, QuAIA’s controversy disrupted the normalization of Israeli nationalism and the neoliberalization of sexuality and sexual rights beyond the Pride parade, and introduced public engagement in the relationship between the politics of Palestine/Israel in Toronto, the machinations of neoliberal public relations of the foreign nation state (Israel), and homonationalism in Canada (i.e. the Pride parade as a space “free” from politics).

At another level, we can interpret the texture of activism in the above case through a complex sensory terrain of externalized, internalized and transformative intensities: the panicked responses from supporters of Israel over the term “Israeli apartheid;” the outraged response from the queer community at the prospect of censoring political speech at the parade; the rise of collective responses as support for QuAIA grew at the parade; the feeling of heightened investment in contesting belonging at Pride; the disturbances and unsettlement in the Pride parade; the revival of queer investments in the Pride parade; the identifications with radical queer politics; the disidentifications with queer politics that aren’t radical enough. Emphasizing the points of encounter and the resonance across bodies, moments and contexts between encounters can be generative for our political imaginaries without relying on utopian fantasies. Moments of controversy, such as the attempt to ban the term “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, Sedgwick and Massumi 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 the 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 quotidiant 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, 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 under neoliberalism. Despite the risks of violent renewals, of neoliberal cooptions, 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 Puar and Pellegrini, “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” (2009, 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, and 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 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” (2007, 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 intensities can 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, or from reinforcing neoliberal ideologies, 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, violence, and hegemony.

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 invites 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.

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 utopian visions and revolutionary desires to the everyday shifts and movements of transformative practices. Drawing on the orientations to thinking about the political that affect theory introduces, I propose that we cultivate a commitment to considering the textured dynamics of disruptions, unsettlements, dissonances, new affinities, encounters and movements as productive for the transformative projects of social movements. Thus, we might re-imaging the victories of social movements as those points of unsettling disruption in the status quo rather than the achievement of some form of liberation. I am not proposing here that affect theory is somehow the “solution” to the problem of social movement fragmentation and theorization, rather I turn to the methodological possibilities emergent in affect theory because it offers different ways of approaching the question of solidarity and its risks. A textured approach allows us to attend to the injuries that motivate transformative projects for justice, while also suspending the moralism of activist dogmatism. At the psychic level, affects rule our encounters with subjugation before we articulate those experiences through the language of oppression. The space between experience and discourse, between affects and the language of feelings and emotions, is a space of resonance and possibility, were we might find different outcomes to the crisis of our present asymmetries.

At the level of the social, an affective approach introduces us to the texture of activism – the resonances of different registers in the making and remaking of political discourses and the
relational dimensions that embed us and orient us in solidarity. Thus, what affect and queerness offer are new ways of attending to the individual in relation to the collective and social. These fields remove us from the debate about proper subjectivity (e.g., “good” activist vs. “bad” oppressor) that have stagnated in identity politics, and attend to our identifications, attachments and belonging in more fluid terms, while also anchoring those attachments to the material realities of social and political asymmetries and injustices.

The impulse to imagine the world as fixed and stable is embedded in the hegemonic ideologies of any given era. We therefore need models of activist engagement and social movement practice that disrupt those stabilizing forces to open space for transformative possibilities. To remain attached to models of activism embedded in the project of doing good or being good, rather than “leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, aggressing, warping” (Sedgwick, 8), we risk attaching to our injured subjectivities, as Brown (1995) warns, or to the continuity of our current worlds. Since there is no singular form of subjugation, there will be no singular act that will reverse or alleviate injustice. Similarly, we cannot have a singular model for activism or social movements. Rather, transformative politics require that we transform in the process of social change.

The becoming of activism, or to be in solidarity, as in the French être solidaire, suggests that we go through our own psychic transformations in the gesture of solidarity. While in English, solidarity is a noun, we might stand in solidarity with another, the French adjective solidaire directs us to the transformative effect of solidarity on our own subjectivities. That we change through solidarity suggests that the politics of solidarity requires a textured approach, not only in our assessments of revolutionary and mass movements, but also across the interpersonal, the everyday, and our own psychic lives. Shifting focus to transformative moments, rather than revolution or utopian futures, 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?

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170 Berlant argues, “an optimistic attachment is invested in one’s own or the world’s continuity, but might feel any number of ways, from the romantic to the fatalistic to the number to the nothing” (2011b, 13)
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.
Conclusion

The Ethics of Solidarity: Textured Activism in the Age of Honour
Killing, Pinkwashing and War

what, politically, might be made of grief besides a cry for war
— Judith Butler

On July 2, 2014, the body of 16-year-old Mohammed Abu Khdeir was found near Jerusalem.  
Burned alive, his death came on the heels of the discovery of the bodies of three Israeli teens, Eyal Yifrah, Gilad Shaar, and Naftali Fraenkel, who were kidnapped June 12th.  
Rumours soon circulated that the boy was gay and that his death may have been the result of honour killing, as “photographs of the boy … [were] posted online with the caption ‘The Arabs killed him for being gay’” (Gross 2014). Investigations later confirmed that he had been abducted, tortured and killed by “Jewish extremists,” not his family. Days later on July 8th Operation Protective Edge began. Looking back at the days leading up to Israel’s longest war in Gaza to date, the honour killing rumour may seem inconsequential. In a war that claimed the lives of approximately 500 children, why focus on a rumour about one boy who was murdered by civilians? Abu Khdeir’s murder was not the defining factor in instigating the war; nevertheless, the narratives surrounding his death set the stage for the discursive landscape of the war. As such, the honour killing rumour reveals the rhetorical life of homonationalism at play in militarized violence, as


173 Their bodies were found on June 30th. Early reports announced that Hamas had orchestrated the kidnapping and murder of the Israeli teens; however, later reports concluded that the kidnappers had acted independently of Hamas.

well as the material effects of this violence quantified in the deaths of over 2100 Palestinian casualties of war and made legible through the rhetoric of sexual rights and state security discourses.

In an opinion piece written for Haaretz, Aeyal Gross (2014) argues that the circulation of the honour killing rumour in Abu Khdeir’s death is an example of pinkwashing. Comparing the Abu Khdeir case to the public refusal to interpret the 2009 Bar Noar murder as evidence of pervasive homophobia in Israel, Gross’ argument reveals how Israeli public discourse mobilizes homophobia in the interests of domestic nationalism. If Israel is liberal and democratic, then cases of homophobic crimes by Israelis must be motivated by individual rather than societal causes. Honour killing, by contrast, depicted as cultural, racial, and religiously motivated (Mojab 2012), is necessarily communal. The distinction between individual and communal violence plays a significant role in connecting gender and sexuality based violence to the nation state. When homophobic violence is individualized, as Gross argues occurred in the Bar Noar murders, the homonational nation state is preserved. Here, the wave of national mourning following the 2009 murders served to posit the nation state as victim of the hate perpetrated by an act of individual revenge, rather than as complicit in the pervasive conditions of homophobia and other forms of sexual- and gender- based violence. Conversely, when acts of violence are marked by cultural difference, as we find in narratives of honour killing, each case of violence is evidence of the communal nature of cultural violence. In both cases, the interplay across multiple social factors in framing violence is obscured as murder is either individualized or reduced to cultural relativism.

The circulation of the honour killing rumour functioned as part of a larger discursive practice that combined Orientalist depictions of Arab cultures as inherently violent and homophobic with homonationalist narratives that couple sexual rights to national security. As such, the rumour played a part in the staging of public endorsement for war in the name of national defense. The combination of public mourning over the murders of the 3 Israeli teenagers and the vilification of Palestinian culture as inherently homophobic provided both reason and

175 Haaretz.com is Israel’s oldest daily newspaper.

176 On August 1, 2009, two people were murdered at Bar Noar LGBT youth center in Tel Aviv. The murder was speculated to be an act of personal revenge, although charges against the primary suspect were later dropped.
justification for militarized force in Gaza. For Judith Butler (2006), the practice of
dehumanization is not simply discursive, “dehumanization emerges at the limits of discursive
life, limits established through prohibition and foreclosure” (36). In the days leading up to the
2014 war on Gaza, the rumour that Abu Khdeir’s murder was an honour crime solidified
collective consent for war by foreclosing the possibility of collective grief. If Abu Khdeir’s death
was at the hands of his own family, then there cannot be a narrative of collective mourning
comparable to the deaths of the 3 Israeli boys.

By highlighting the story of the honour killing rumour, I am proposing a slight rethinking
of the concept of pinkwashing in its relationship to homonationalism. In *Rethinking
Homonationalism*, Puar (2013) argues

Homonationalism and pinkwashing should not be seen as parallel phenomena. Rather,
pinkwashing is one manifestation and practice made possible within and because of
homonationalism. Unlike pinkwashing, homonationalism is not a state practice per se. It
is instead the historical convergence of state practices, transnational circuits of queer
commodity culture and human rights paradigms, and broader global phenomena such as
the increasing entrenchment of Islamophobia…. The conflation of homonationalism and
pinkwashing can result in well-intentioned critiques or political stances that end up
reproducing the queer exceptionalism of homonationalism in various ways (337).

For Puar, pinkwashing is a manifestation of homonationalism, whereas homonationalism is an
ideological formation combining neoliberal, militarized, consumer and discursive fields. In part,
Puar’s assertion of this distinction between a manifestation (pinkwashing) and a periodization
(homonationalism) is compelling, and indeed activist use of pinkwashing in the queer Palestine
movement largely reinforces this distinction, since pinkwashing is primarily identified as a
practice of state distraction. However, what the story of Abu Khdeir’s murder reveals is that
beyond the discursive practice that pinkwashing mobilizes, it also serves a direct function in
licensing state violence, militarization and dehumanization. While Puar cautions that critics of
pinkwashing reinforce queer exceptionalism in the West, her desire to distance pinkwashing
from homonationalism neither serves to deepen our understanding of either of these concepts,
nor does it invite us to consider the ethics of anti-pinkwashing activism beyond Massad’s (2007)
critique of the Gay International. Instead, I argue that the honour killing rumour circulating
around the 2014 war demonstrates that pinkwashing *is* homonationalism *par excellence.*

In the honour killing rumour, pinkwashing was mobilized not only as a way to celebrate
the nation state and divert attention away from Israel’s violation of human rights, but it also
served to condone the subsequent war. Following the confirmation that Abu Khdeir’s killers were Jewish Israelis, public discourse shifted to explain the attack as a revenge narrative, which individualized the act of violence. Conversely, the conjuring of the honour killing rumour collectivized violence on Palestinians culturally and racially, so that even though his death was not the result of an honour killing, the rumour functioned to foreclose the humanity of Palestinians. Puar’s attempt to untangle pinkwashing from homonationalism aims to intervene in the way some critics of pinkwashing have come to reinforce their sexual exceptionalism; however, as I argued in Chapter 3, all gestures of solidarity are at risk today because homonationalism is a structuring ideology of the early 21st century – regardless of whether or not any group or individual posits themselves as exceptional. As such, we must think carefully about why we should separate homonationalism from pinkwashing. As the aftermath of Abu Khdeir’s murder demonstrates, pinkwashing functions much more insidiously and much more in concert with state violence than previous discussion of this practice – by both activists and academics, myself included – understood.

Public consent for war was not the only possible outcome of the deaths of these boys; Butler argues there are other passages available through grief than military violence and retribution (xii). An alternative story could have emerged in the aftermath of Abu Khdeir’s death – one that witnessed nationalist revenge play out and extended the public mourning of the deaths of the 3 Israeli boys to the Palestinian teen. Instead, the possibility of empathetic extension, compassion, perhaps even solidarity was foreclosed as the rumour of honour killing in Abu Khdeir’s murder served to anchor the child’s death in pinkwashing discourses that dehumanized all Palestinians. Despite the quotidian narratives of death that frame life in the Palestine/Israel conflict, examining the logics of pinkwashing at play in the honour killing rumour reveal important considerations for thinking about the problem of war and violence. In the previous chapters, I examined how pinkwashing functions discursively in demarcating neoliberal narratives of modernity and in bolstering the nation state; however, as I argue above,

177 Reporting on Abu Khedir’s assailants consistently referred to the murder as an act of revenge for the three Israeli boys killed in June.

178 See Sherene Razack’s (2008) work on discourses of Islamophobia and honour killing that legitimize the “stigmatization, surveillance, incarceration, abandonment, torture, and bombs” launched against Muslims in Canada and internationally (5).
pinkwashing discourses are also tools of dehumanization used not only to legitimize violence, but also to foreclose the ability to recognize life. In the neoliberal reformulation of Orientalist discourses that renew civilizational mandates for colonial violence in homonational times, pinkwashing serves as a discursive mechanism that facilitates the dissociation of Palestinian life and licenses military violence.

Until now, I have focused on the way sexuality is mobilized to bolster state violence and the social movement mobilized to resist this practice in the transnational queer Palestine solidarity and anti-pinkwashing movement. However, in the face of the devastating effects of war – not just on Gaza, but also across the region following the Arab Spring – why bother focusing on the marginal role and impact of pinkwashing in sustaining state violence? When I began this project, the MENA was filled with the hope of revolutionary change on the heels of the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings, and the civil uprisings in Syria. Five years after the beginning of the Arab Spring, hope has turned to despair as Syria’s revolution has erupted into a violent civil war and Egypt has fallen under an increasingly repressive government.¹⁷⁹ What hope is there for solidarity activism in the face of violence that so quickly replaced the revolutionary potential of civil uprisings? Why consider the details of solidarity in a world plagued with war and brutality?

Revolution, Solidarity and the Project of Transformation

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\text{vulnerability is one precondition for humanization}
\]

— Judith Butler

Amidst the brutality of war and the flexibility of neoliberal capitalism to adapt to and absorb the shifting discourses of the Left that frame the political stakes of my project, the question of solidarity is more urgent than ever. How do we recuperate solidarity from its risk of serving hegemonic configurations of power? In her preface to Precarious Life, Butler suggests that we need to theorize interdependency for global political community (xiii). However, interdependency is not a straightforward task. As I have argued throughout, solidarity is at risk

because our attachments are structured by the governing ideologies of our times (i.e. neoliberalism and later homonationalism). Nevertheless, what hope do we have for global interdependency without a model of solidarity? This task is all the more urgent during times of revolution and war, when transnational solidarities hold promise in their ability to shape global actions and direct movement development. Conversely, in the absence of solidarity, the failure of global interdependency is made more acute in the face of international disregard for, and complicity in, the violence and deaths of civilians in the early 21st century. Despite the inspiration that revolutionary change offers to our political imaginings, the reality of violence that accompanies revolution means that we cannot simply hope for a utopian future. We must instead find a way to balance between the potential of our attachments and the texture of activist practices to cultivate a political imaginary attentive to risk. Thus, solidarity, and all models of global interdependency, must offer us models of attachment that can shift, change and transform according to the needs of each context and each moment.

What happens to solidarity when we can only imagine transformation when it occurs in major shifts and changes in the socio-political landscape? When revolutions fail to bring their utopian promises, political depression begins to sink in, immobilizing social movements in the wake of grief. Today, the death and repression that followed the Arab Spring and the general apathy of the North America Left that has festered in the period of neoliberalization from the 1980s onwards, has eroded much of the energy and hope of transnational social movements. As activists feel the devastation of increasing global militarization, how to we keep political imagination alive? Part of the task of rethinking solidarity involves disrupting the tropes of social movement success, which embed our visions of social change exclusively in revolutionary terms. Rather than prescribe a model for good solidarity, I offer instead a set of methods for approaching solidarity and applying the textured interpretive techniques that I began outlining in

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180 For instance, in the 2014 war on Gaza, the work of North American based groups like Jewish Voices for Peace offer guiding models for mobilizing against war and structuring the rhetoric of solidarity.

181 The relative global silence on the Syrian revolution provides one of the harshest examples of this failure. However, we can also include here the mass deaths of civilians in Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan, as the US and its allies wage wars in the region.

182 See Ann Cvetkovich’s (2011) work on the Left’s “political depression.”
Chapter 4. As an activist and scholar invested in the transformative possibility of change, my hope is that my contribution can lay some groundwork for the practice of social and political transformation in light of the risks associated with solidarity under neoliberal and homonational times.

Taking cue from Sedgwick and Deleuze & Guattari, I propose that we turn to the middle ground as a site for rethinking our approaches to social and political transformation, and as a place for theorizing solidarity in a transnational context. This involves attending to the interconnection of transformation across the revolutionary and quotidian dimensions of activist practice. If we rethink social movement successes and failures as both essential parts of the process of social and political transformation, then our measures of assessment and evaluation of activist practices can shift to the process of movement rather than the evaluation of liberation. In this regard, only stagnation is failure. When solidarity is stuck, when activists are immobilized, we find the undoing of the generative potential of social movements. Thus, if the key to social movement practice is movement itself, rather than the ascent towards utopia, then we must develop ways of articulating activism and solidarity that are generative of fluidity, flexibility, mutability, and ambivalence.

Speaking on Deleuze and Guattari’s work on assemblages, Massumi (1987) argues, “a plateau is reached when circumstances combine to bring an activity to a pitch of intensity that is not automatically dissipated in a climax” (xiv). This produces a sustained energy that can be reactivated into other activities. What Deleuze and Guattari offer then is a way of thinking about the generation of political potential and possibility. For an activist politic to climax forecloses the potential of new uses of organizing energies. The metaphor of the plateau complements Sedgwick’s invocation of the in-between. Here, the energy of social movements, solidarities, and transformative practices can be harnessed through the continuation of these mobilizing energies, which do not come to resolution with a moment of victorious climax. Likewise, we cannot assess social movement successes by attempting to capture the good versus the bad; instead, we need an approach to activism that helps move us in both our social movements and society more broadly.

The model of textured activism that I outline here does not simply celebrate “good” activism and condemn the “bad,” but rather highlights the tensions, implications and effects of various practices that either gets us stuck (stagnates) or might un-stick us (moves us). Despite
activist intentions, what we might crudely call “good” activism does not emerge out of “good people” or being “good,” and such investments in the exceptionalism of activist subjects is dangerous grounds for our political struggles. Indeed, almost all social movements have seen how the lauding of activist figure heads so easily detracts from larger projects of transformation – as attention focuses on the representative figure rather than the actual conditions that produce abjection. Metaphors of texture and plateaus provide new conceptual and abstract frameworks for thinking about social movement practice, however these arguments are not simply rhetorical. There are pragmatic implications to this work that I outline as a conclusion to this project.

Textured Practices of Solidarity: Building Resonance Into Social Movements

To ask for recognition, or to offer it ... is to solicit a becoming, to instigate a transformation, to petition the future always in relation to the Other
— Judith Butler

How can a textured approach to solidarity influence responses to war? In the case of the Palestine solidarity movement, this task includes both strategic and ambivalent attachments across identifications, political rhetoric and discursive techniques. For instance, the strategic investment in liberal and consumerist models of justice embedded in the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement (Bakan & Abu-Laban 2009) serve a temporary unifying force in generating movement building energy. However, once critiques of neoliberal capital are centralized, consumer boycotts lose meaning as social movement interventions aim to unravel models of consumer-citizenship in favour of radical democratic reformations (Dobrowolsky 2010). Similarly, in times of war and militarized occupation, it may suffice to call for an end to war, or an end to apartheid, but once the conditions of militarized violence one day wane, we’ll need new attachments for reorganizing both civil society and forms of solidarity. To fix our attachments places our solidarities at risk, because social movements need adaptability to not only survive, but also to contribute to the reshaping of our social and political worlds in times of transformation.

Massumi (2002) is interested in the practice of invention and reinvention. However, he warns that the method of applying concepts simply imposes systemic ways of thinking onto our work (17). Instead, he proposes an exemplary method, whereby the work of thinking and writing is focused on details of examples, which illuminates both the singularity of that example and the
complexity of each example and each instance. “The desired result is a systematic openness: an open system” (18). If we take seriously poststructuralism’s most important critique of social movements, it is that we cannot rely on notions of truth in our efforts for justice. Transformation cannot occur through a singular model of how life should be (re)organized. The discomfort that poststructural critique has with these assertions has left social movements waning, and the turn to either utopian hope or postmodern oppositions offer seductive but insufficient ideologies for social movements to follow. Taking seriously the arguments of poststructural critique means developing ways to start thinking about new processes for social movements. I would like to conclude by outlining a few ways that we might start incorporating textured methods to the way we approach transformation and social movements.

First, if we must mobilize binary logics in our social movements, such as for strategic goals (e.g. boycott), then we must also remain vigilant of the risk associated with our attachments to these binaries. This involves suspending binary thinking once early oppositional frameworks have been established, and turning our attention to the dimensions of resonance in political strategizing. In practice, this might mean employing tactics that are not simply oppositional, but that resonate with the texture of different geo-temporal and social moments. This involves the difficult but significant attempt to center social movements and projects of transformation on moments of intensity, instances of articulation, and other contexts shaped by the experiences of the present. This is particularly important in juxtaposition to universalizing goals, which flatten and homogenize sites of conflict or contestation.

Liberatory projects that center on a vision of utopian futures or revolutionary change risk reproducing new relations of injustice in the shifts of power that accompany the reorganization of social, political and economic hierarchies. Transformation for the sake of transforming is not by virtue a shift towards better ways of being, however the importance of pushing towards an approach to activism that invites transformation helps unfix us from the re-articulations of hegemonic relations. Although strategically social movements require opponents to battle against, since movement, change and transformation cannot occur without the friction of these

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183 For instance, Palestinian-Israeli dialogue groups are a popular model for peace initiatives, but these projects tend to flatten the asymmetries of experiences of violence in the colonial relationship of occupier and occupied.
encounters (either with conflict, intensities, or tension), opposition cannot be the only way that transformation is imagined. Instead, social movements must produce models that are shifting, dynamic, and that center on resonance. This could involve textured forms of opposition, such as selecting practices/events/moments/instances to oppose rather than constructing static opponents. This requires that we draw others into transformative resonances through our encounters, rather than through shared identifications alone. Within the Palestine movement, this may mean choosing clear opponents based on nationalism at times, such as in opposition to pro-Israel lobbyists in the case of the attempts to ban the term “Israeli apartheid” and QuAIA from the Toronto Pride parade. However, if the goal of Palestine solidarity activism is to see the decolonization of Palestine/Israel and the transformation of the political, economic and social fabric of the region, then we need political orientations that are adaptable rather than stubborn.

On the heels of Operation Protective Edge, the available framework of the BDS movement lent well to quick international mobilization. Across Europe and Latin America, divestment campaigns generated quick successes. This suggests that the establishment of usable frameworks facilitates political actions in transnational solidarity. However, such frameworks should not be celebrated as ideal models alone. Instead, we need approaches to activism and solidarity that are capable of fluidly moving across political binaries and towards political resonances.

Second, the challenge for building practices of social movements resonance is two-fold. First, how do we produce encounters that foster the possibility of transformation that does not simply reproduce binary opposition? This is primarily a question about what terms we choose for articulating activism and solidarity. Second, how do we continue social movement momentum without clear binary opponents? This last question is probably the most difficult, as it requires a continual renegotiation of the terms of encounter. Neither of these questions is meant to elicit a specific answer, rather they are strategic tools for social movements and activists to deploy instrumentally as a way to interrupt the normalizing moments of binary thinking in activist practice. That we cannot escape the (re)production of binaries should not mean that we simply accept the dominant modes of dualistic logics. Nor should we imagine that our opponents in political struggle are not themselves constituted by the very terms that structure subjugation. The effects of transformation work best when they unravel and reconfigure subjectivities, and when they require us to shift and attend to these changes. For instance, in the queer Palestine movement, the critique of sexual rights discourses under the conditions of homonationalism does
not mean that queer activists should abandon the project of queer liberation; rather, it proposes that in different contexts and dimensions, we employ different techniques of solidarity. Thus, queer solidarities require critiques of sexual rights when those rights are mobilized to uphold state violence, but there may be other moments when these rights need to be invoked for transformative projects.

If we want to alleviate suffering, then we cannot remain invested in fixed subjectivities and identities. Instead, we need to attend to the traumas that inspire us to hold onto the comfort of some stable notion of who we are, at the same time that we foster those subjectivities to transform, in order to produce new relationships of belonging and new configurations of social organization. This consideration is perhaps an ethical orientation offered by affect, which is to say that affects – in their moving, shifting, transmitting qualities – do not define or fix us as subjects, rather they circulate and structure our encounters and attachments, and thus offer us continuous possibilities for new emergences, different experiences, transformative potential, and new modes of belonging. If we can translate the political through the textured framework of resonances, we can develop better language around how to enact a politic of transformation that is attentive to the need to always unfix itself from the lure of normalization.

Lastly, I want to return to the question of textured activism to think about how social movements are currently engaged in these types of practices. In the previous chapters, I discussed how queer activism is perhaps one of the most salient spaces in our contemporary moment for pushing social movements in new directions. Although I do not want to celebrate queer activism as an exceptional model for social movements, there are components to queer activist practice that I think are worth highlighting to help us think about what it means to suspend an investment in binary thinking and foster transformative emergences simultaneously. The queerness of queer activism is perhaps most meaningful in its structuring of its opponent. For queerness, the enemy is not the heterosexual subject or the family, even though both of these figures represent the social norm against which queer subjectivities are violently expelled; rather, queerness produces its opponents through structuring logics, such as the ideologies of heteronormativity, homonormativity and patriarchy. Queerness’ ability to incite dissonance in the normalization of the structures of daily life under hegemonic ideologies such as patriarchy and capitalism do not make hetero-consumers out to be the enemy, but rather interrupt the temporality of life under these hegemonies, and thus call into question the normalization of
neoliberal conditions of sexuality, gender, and class. In structuring a queer politic around these ideologies rather than producing a stable enemy to fight against, queer activism offers the possibility of a moment of encounter that opens us to transformation.

The potential for transformation exists universally; all life adapts, changes, shifts, and moves. For Phillips, our capacity for adaptation is what brings us hope for our life stories. However, not all change can fuel our political imaginaries. Massumi distinguishes between the possibility and potential of change when he argues, “possibility is a variation implicit in what a thing can be said to be when it is on target. Potential is the immanence of a thing to its still indeterminate variation, under way … The distinction between potential and possibility is a distinction between conditions of emergences and re-conditionings of the emerged” (9). In turning to the mutable, unstable, shifting, dissonant, unsettling approaches to activism, we might begin to shift our social movements from their present state of being stuck in the structuring logics of neoliberalism, of oppositional politics, and of revolutionary desire or utopian futurity. In doing so, we can try to produce different ways of doing activism or becoming activists that attend to both the need to effect change and the risks of doing so.
References


Naghibi, Nima. 2007. Rethinking Global Sisterhood: Western Feminism and Iran. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.


Appendix 1

Abbreviations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DRP</th>
<th>Dispute Resolution Process</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IAW</td>
<td>Israeli Apartheid Week</td>
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<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
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<td>PQBDS</td>
<td>Palestinian Queers for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions</td>
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<tr>
<td>QuAIA</td>
<td>Queers Against Israeli Apartheid</td>
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<tr>
<td>QUIT</td>
<td>Queers Undermining Israeli Terrorism</td>
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<tr>
<td>WSF</td>
<td>World Social Forum</td>
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Appendix 2

Timeline of the Queer Palestine Movement

2001 Kvisa Shchora aka Black Laundry (Tel Aviv, Israel)
2001 QUIT aka Queers Undermining Israeli Terrorism (San Francisco, USA)
2002 ASWAT (Haifa, Palestine/Israel)
2004 Helem (Beirut, Lebanon)
2005 Palestinian Civil Society calls for international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions of Israel
2005 QUIT’s international campaign to boycott World Pride Jerusalem
2006 alQaws (Jerusalem, Palestine/Israel)
2006 Lebanon War
2006 Out Against the Occupation (Montreal, Canada)
2006 World Pride Jerusalem, theme “Love Without Borders”
2007 Meem (Beirut, Lebanon)
2008 QuAIA Toronto aka Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (Canada)
2008 Bekhsoos (Lebanon)
2009 War on Gaza

2010 PQBDS aka Palestinian Queers for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (Palestine)
2010 QuAIA Vancouver aka Queers Against Israeli Apartheid, Vancouver (Canada)
2010 Nasawiya (Beirut, Lebanon)
2010 QuAIA Edmonton (Canada)
2011 Pinkwatching Israel (PQBDS & Queer Arab activists)
2011 QAIA New York aka Queers Against Israeli Apartheid, New York (USA)
2011 Queers Against Pinkwashing (Sweden)
2012 US LGBT Delegation to Palestine
2012 No to Pinkwashing (UK)
2012 Queer Visions at the World Social Forum (Porto Alegre, Brazil)
2012 QuAIA Halifax (Canada)
2013 QuAIA Seattle (Canada)
2014 QuAIA Auckland (New Zealand)
2015 QuAIA Toronto Retires