

**A STUDY OF TRIANGULATED NON-BELONGING:
Speaking up in The World We Were Never Meant to Survive in**

By
Klára Hulíková

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Supervisor: Hadley Zaun Renkin

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Vienna, 25 May 2025

Klára Hulíková

Abstract

In intersectional feminist philosophy, many have criticized theorizing which ignores one experience connected to a multi-minority identity over another. No one has, however, attempted to conceptualize the phenomenological experience of living and belonging in the world as a double-minority identity person. A double-minority identity person is someone, whose identity is constituted by being part of two minority groups at the same time. In this work, I will focus specifically on queer People of Color (POC). I set out to conceptualize how it is to (not) belong in a world that has not been designed for your needs as a queer Person of Color. I argue that the experience of a queer POC is unique as they experience non-belonging alongside three axes. First, they do not belong as a queer POC in the heteronormative majority culture and society, second, they do not belong as non-white to the homonormative queer community and third, they do not belong culturally as a queer person to their ethnic community. Such a rejection results in either having to deny parts of their identity whichever community they enter, or in constant living-in-opposition-to. In the final chapter, I have examined possible solutions to such non-belonging that are creative instead of negative or suppressive. I argue that this is a distinct mode of being in the world that influences the queer POC's psyche and the ways in which they are capable of interacting with any community. When treated as non-belonging everywhere they go, the queer POC's identity is fragmented and they are left feeling isolated from all communities while prevented from seeing themselves as a whole. This can cause the queer POC to be unable to relate to the communities they live in and cause them to struggle with having a relationship with themselves as a person that is whole.

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I dedicate this work to all the aliens, sad and rightfully angry queer angels who were made to feel like they do not belong. It is not true. The world has always been yours. Shout. Be furious. Be loving. And fight on.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCING TRIANGULATED NON-BELONGING: “AM I IN THE WRONG CITY, COUNTRY OR WORLD, PERHAPS?”

Taking a seat at the family table can feel like taking on a designated role and foregoing how you have learned to be in the world when you have moved out. For me, I live my life in two places: Vienna and Bratislava. In Vienna, I have my own room, a wall full of anarchist posters, and a poster of the Vienna Porn Film Festival, Lesbian porn shorts, and a poster of my friends’ queer post-punk band. I can be they/them and I can stim as much as I want to and be unobserved while I eat my food, which as an autistic person, I prefer. But in Vienna, I mostly eat alone in my room. I miss the exclamations of my two sisters and the room we share and the room of my heart remains empty without their smell. I miss my parents’ friendly banter, making fun of us taking our studies oh-so-very-seriously.

So, I come back to my first home, Bratislava. But of course, it comes with taking my designated seat at the table, next to my mother. With being called “daughter”. Questions are fired my way: “Are you really sure you like women? Like you would have a girlfriend? Do you really mean to tell us that maybe you do not want to settle down and have a family?” Time and time again I ask my dad not to call me his girl. “But you do not REALLY mean THAT, do you? I mean, you look like one?”

Now, I am being asked to pick my beloved little sister up from art class. When I have autism burnout to pretend to be joyful in front of her because my mother is overwhelmed. My autistic needs are not seen, for they do not exist in Bratislava. And when little sister’s beloved exclamations follow my overstimulated heavy-footed boots, I pull myself up by my own

bootstraps so my step can be light for her. I belong at that table, sharing food with my family, albeit not as who I fully am.

Otherwise, you must know the feeling of not sitting down at the table. I tried it. Picture this: I am in Vienna; I am fiercely queer and out. I walk into a FLINTA bar (a bar designated only for female, lesbian, intersex, non-binary, trans, agender people) for the first time. But it turns out I am too Eastern, or masculine or poor or autistic to be at that FLINTA bar, or so it feels from the looks of the others... “I didn’t know you had queer people back in Slovakia...”

It seems that wherever I go, people pick a part of who I am, a different one each time and tell me I do not belong exactly because of that part. In Bratislava, what makes me odd, is that I am non-binary, and that I am autistic. In queer Vienna I am weird because I am of Roma descent and because I am Eastern-European. I cannot be fiercely queer and out and belong to my heritage at the same time. Frankly, most of the time I feel like a total alien.

So, I could either accept being the alien everywhere I go, or constantly pretend to be someone I am not (altering parts of my identity I identify with). In the first case I would be entirely lonely. In the second case, I would feel so fragmented, internally unconnected. I do not see how I could feel like a whole person. I would feel extremely estranged from who I am. These two lines: being lonely in every community and being estranged from (my)self is how I understand alienation. Queer People of Color (POC) must feel similar.

In this work I will focus on the alienated experience caused by what I will call the “triangulated non-belonging” of people with double minority identities within the contemporary cultures of Western societies. More specifically, I will focus on queer POC and their experience with both, the heteronormativity and homonormativity within contemporary Western societies. I argue that queer POC initially know no other mode of being than that of environments that are defined by exclusion and prejudice toward their identities. Such mode of being is specific to people of double identities.

By triangulated non-belonging I mean this mode of relating to the world, specific to queer POC, which consists in being excluded from three different communities alongside three axes. Alternating parts of their identity are denied depending on context, causing loneliness and disconnect from themselves - alienation. Firstly, queer POC are excluded from the majoritarian heteronormative society on the basis of being part of a minority. Secondly, they are excluded from the homonormative queer spaces based on being non-white. Finally, they are excluded from their ethnic community on the basis of being queer. Wherever such a person moves, instead of belonging they find rejection based on different parts of their identity. I call this phenomenon triangulated non-belonging.

I take heteronormativity to mean the normative status quo of Western societies, presented as normatively neutral, whereas in reality it is charged in favor of heterosexuality, its culture, institutions and everything that aids it in flourishing. Michael Warner coined heteronormativity in 1991 as:

“Heteronormativity refers to the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent... but also privileged” (Warner 1991, *Fear of a Queer planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, p. xxiii), but they put it more succinctly together with Berlant in *Sex in Public: “A heteronormative culture makes heterosexuality seem not only coherent and organized but also privileged and ideal”* (Berlant & Warner, 1998, p. 548).

Oftentimes, in queer environments that have a potential to be affirming to queer identities are prejudiced towards POC and orientated around whiteness, cisnormativity, middle classness, being able-bodied (Ahmed, 2006, p. 120). Such treatment is tied to the concept of homonormativity as defined by Duggan:

“Homonormativity is a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and ... but ... sustains them while promising the ... privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (Duggan, 2003, p. 50).

However, what I want to argue is that if gay culture is anchored in domesticity and consumption, not only are homonormative queer communities prejudiced against POC but rather are prejudiced against POC queerness. Ways of being queer which do not align with dominant ways of white, middle class, able-bodied, cis queerness are seen as “bad gay”. One “subordinate” way of being queer is POC queerness. The relevant property for rejection of the queer POC varies from context to context (sometimes you are different and you do not belong because you are not white, sometimes because you are queer and sometimes both).

In virtue of this process a human loses a horizon of intelligibility.

“To be oppressed means that you already exist as a subject of some kind, ... but to be unreal is something else again. To be oppressed you must first become intelligible. To find that you are fundamentally unintelligible (indeed, that the laws of culture and of language find you to be an impossibility) is to find that you have not yet achieved access to the human, ...” (Butler, 2004, p. 30).

The way in which such a person is perceived as first and foremost human becomes precarious (Butler, 2004, p. 25). As a consequence of being made an outsider based on alternating parts of their identity, the person ceases to be recognized as a person in their personhood. This goes both for the perception of others of the queer POC and for the perception they have of themselves.

These people will not only be rejected in their being a Person of Color or simply for being queer but in their entirety, as a human being. This is because to treat identity as consisting

in deconstructable parts, where some of these parts are treated as undesirable (different ones for different contexts) enhances the loss of the “intelligibility as human”. Identity is often treated as fragmented where different parts are alternately denied and highlighted similar to how Cohen describes it in *Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics*:

“Undoubtedly, within different contexts various characteristics of our total being—for example, race, gender, class, sexuality—are highlighted or called on to make sense of a particular situation. However, my concern is centered on those individuals who consistently activate only one characteristic of their identity, ...” (Cohen, 1997, p. 454).

However, I am not only convinced like Cohen that this fragmentation is harmful for the individuals whom it is done to, but I am also convinced that this is ontologically inaccurate, for reasons I shall discuss in chapter 5. Such treatment is harmful because it creates the “loss of intelligibility as human”, for queer POC. Making an outsider of them in every context based on a different characteristic is triangulated non-belonging and results in alienation. Butler’s “loss of intelligibility as human” is equivalent to my concept of alienation from the queer POC’s self and the surrounding communities. A queer POC who is constantly rejected as the undesirable parts of themselves cannot possibly feel like a whole human being, nor that they belong somewhere as a whole human being.

Roadmap

First, an anecdotal attempt to capture the feelings of alienation in different contexts is presented. This is followed by laying down the problematic and conceptual delineation of the phenomenon of triangulated non-belonging, which is explained in the context of queer POC's lived experience. To conceptualize triangulated non-belonging, I am utilizing four concepts of alienation (by Fanon, Butler, Ahmed and Lorde) each to ground one axis of living out the experience of non-belonging. In chapter 3 I explore the alienation along the line of being queer toward the heteronormative Western society. Later, in chapter 4 I circle back to analyze being non-white in the homonormative spaces of Western societies. To tie everything together, In the 5th chapter I discuss how the previous chapters work together to ground the triangulated non-belonging and discuss the mechanics of othering queer POC based on alternating socially constructed differences - attributes to create in-group identity, causing alienation using Gilles Deleuze's ontology of difference. In the conclusion I reintroduce my key claims and discuss potential ways to overcome triangulated non-belonging and consequential alienation of queer POC.

CHAPTER 2: AN ENTIRELY DISPLACED ALIEN, OR “THE QUEER QUEER”

In the chapters that will follow, the concept of alienation I am using is three-fold. One for each direction of the triangulation. Each axis of non-belonging has a corresponding notion of alienation based on which community is excluding the queer POC and how the othering is happening. Firstly, I use Franz Fanon’s framework for people of color in racialized environments, to illustrate how racialized environments make queerness unacceptable in ethnic communities, due to a misalignment with traditional values. For queer people in heteronormative environments, I use Sarah Ahmed’s *disorientation*, a concept that describes non-belonging of queer people in heteronormative spaces. I choose Ahmed’s concept of disorientation because it gives alienation both a spatial and emotional dimension. For queer POC in homonormative communities I use Audre Lorde’s personal testimony as well as her theory describing how being of Color is seen as incompatible with queerness in both homonormative and heteronormative environments. Specifically, in Black literary circles and in the face of white feminism.

I argue that the experience of being in the world as a queer POC is specific and distinct from all three: a queer white person, a straight person of Color and a white straight person; such an experience, therefore, ought to be understood and analyzed in its complexity. Indeed, as Audre Lorde writes, any person's world happens at the intersection of what others might call parts of their identity: “*My sexuality is part and parcel of who I am, and my poetry comes from the intersection of me and my worlds*” (Lorde, 1984, p. 99). What others call parts of a person's identity is in fact simply that person's lived life.

The queer POC’s queerness is seen as precarious in their ethnic communities. Queerness is often seen as something alien that does not fit with a Black person's identity. For

example, lesbians in Black communities are at times seen as a disruptive element challenging the masculinity of Black men defined by racialized stereotypes (Lorde, 1984, p. 47). This is problematic, besides else precisely due to the fact that Black masculinity in Western cultures is mostly created through the white gaze (Du Bois, 1903, pp. 2–3). Therefore, queerness is often stipulated as a value element imposed externally on the community to challenge the custom in the vein of white imperialism (Lorde, 1984, p. 116).

Therefore, being in the world of a queer POC is defined by exclusion producing feelings of alienation, no matter which community they attempt to relate to. This is, I argue, due to the fact that unlike the communities which are constituted by one defining characteristic, the identities of queer POC cannot be fragmented into parts to accommodate the groups. Their identity ought to be accepted as a whole, they are an entire person.

To subdue such multifaceted fragmentation seems a near impossible task. However, to my mind, the best chance to overcome alienation caused by exclusion and triangulated non-belonging for queer POC, is presented to us in Jose Esteban Muñoz's framework of *disidentification*. It provides an array of potential solutions to how queer POC can navigate and resist alienation and prevent non-belonging in a creative way. In Muñoz's framework this can be done creatively, while the queer POC's can overcome fragmentation without denying parts of their identity. Muñoz argues that such identity fragmentation and suppression of its parts can be overcome in negotiation with the dominant culture, where the queer POC simultaneously identifies with it and against it. She appropriates parts of it to give it meaning relevant to her own struggle, thereby queering it. Muñoz writes, that:

“The subject who disidentifies negotiates strategies of resistance within the flux of discourse and power. Disidentification is about managing and negotiating historical trauma and

contemporary politics while imagining ... a new understanding of self that is not fragmented by the dominant culture” (Muñoz, 1999, p. 6).

As a result, the subject overcomes the fragmentation while managing to find a way to engage with society at large without having to sacrifice parts of the self. In this process the subject tames the dominant culture as her own and creates to form their own cultural signaling. Disidentification is transforming the dominant narrative through reassigning its significance. Its significance becomes to tell her own story and to give that story her own meaning.

"Disidentification is the survival strategy that works within and outside the dominant public sphere simultaneously, enabling minority subjects to reimagine and transform the world..." (Muñoz, 1999, p. 7).

In this way, the queer POC does not need to sacrifice part of their own identity in order to be part of the majority culture. Instead, they appropriate the dominant culture through performance for their own purposes, thereby subversively transforming it. White heteronormative culture and its symbolism, can be used to live out some of the harsh realities of queer POC's lives. Through giving the majoritarian culture new meaning, they are able to queer it. Muñoz's concept of *disidentification* will be relevant again later, where I elaborate solutions to queer POC's triangulated non-belonging in majoritarian society and their communities.

CHAPTER 3: ALICE FELL INTO HELL: THE CARNIVAL OR MIRRORS

In talking about queer people's alienation in contemporary Western heteronormative societies I choose to engage Sarah Ahmed's queer phenomenology as groundwork to understand the senses in which queer people might feel they do not belong. Sarah Ahmed's take on alienation is unique because it combines elements of emotional and spatial exclusion of queer POC from life. This sense of alienation is especially relevant to my work because it explains how alienation is not just loneliness but also a way of life as it alters and limits ways in which queer POC are able to interact with the physical world around them. It also shows the ways in which a physical inability to interact in a prescribed way can make the queer POC feel out of place. It is the second dimension of Sara Ahmed's conception of alienation that I see as particularly relevant to then further conceptualize triangulated non-belonging.

Like Sara Ahmed, I too use Merleau-Ponty's conceptualization of spatialization of the body to explain how all bodies inherently relate to space and through space. Indeed, all bodies become relational in virtue of being in space.

"If we contrive it that a subject sees the room in which he is only through a mirror, he will immediately reorganize his world in accordance with the images in the mirror. ... he will direct his steps and his movements by reference to the false distances and the false directions of the image. The room is duplicated: the virtual room has become his environment, and the real room has ceased to be so" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 291).

According to Merleau-Ponty the normative dimension can be described by the straight body, being "in line" - things seem straight when they are on the vertical line. Then it seems that queerness indeed literally means standing out and making or having a space of one's own

as if living in a separate room. Otherwise aligning with the normative space in one way or another, thereby possibly denying parts of the self. Bodies also sexualize through the way they inhabit space (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 291).

For some, Ahmed argues, their tendencies to relate to and in space are overridden by the way space is set up to be related to.

“Spaces are not neutral; they are shaped by histories of inclusion and exclusion. Bodies take shape through tending toward objects that are reachable, which are available as lines of action. These lines are both personal and social: ...” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 14).

The status quo, though presented as normatively neutral, is not. It has an inscribed way to do things - a specific way to relate to one another in space is encouraged for specific bodies. And it is the straight way.

Think for example, how toilets are designed. We divide by defecating based on our assigned gender at birth. There seem to be a few assumptions hidden there: people have genitalia corresponding to their assigned gender at birth, opposite genders are attracted to each other, genitalia is sexual, genitalia is private and ought not to be seen by the members of opposite genders. So then, this completely ignores and erases the fact that some people are attracted to the same gender.

Similarly, think how space functions in ghettos. Some people, for example, Romani people in Slovakia are born into a space that is a half-fallen-apart housing complex from the communist times (Kusá, 2012). How can children relate to each other there? how can they play if they are amongst dust and rubble and their parents are in constant fear that their child will be killed by a falling ceiling. So it seems, for some children there is no space to play. Does that

mean that only some children are worth having space to play? The status quo of relating in space is not neutral.

According to Ahmed, sexuality can be both spatially and analytically understood through lineage. Queer people by virtue of their sexuality challenge the preconceived ways of behavior that are given, prescribed by heteronormativity. Lines of behavior complementary with societal values (such as being attracted to the opposite gender, or wanting to start a family), like paths, become more prominent when repeated in the same way over time. Space and society as it is now, is not normatively neutral but rather set out in a way that promotes heteronormativity with the goal of reproduction, hence, genealogy.

“The family is a straight line, which means that sexual orientation is also a matter of following lines, of being aligned with the family line. The heterosexual couple reproduces, by reproducing the line. Queer subjects, in inhabiting spaces that do not extend the family line, are seen as going astray, as deviating from the line” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 85).

In other words, currently, Western society is set up in such a way which promotes the ability of heterosexual couples to find each other, get married, and start a family so that Bodies are in line when they behave in a way that assures the family line, through reproduction.

By deviating from the threaded path of behavior that is in line with societal values of heteronormativity, the queer is in fact not only queering the way things are done in “our society” but also disregarding the potentiality of reproduction in the future. Through this act the queer is indirectly betraying the implicit promise they have to their parents. The father’s lineage and his name is not preserved. The queer person then also often feels as if they were wronging their parents through their sexuality. Sara Ahmed writes:

“...subjects are required to “tend toward” some objects and not others as a condition of familial as well as social love. For the boy to follow the family line he “must” orientate himself toward women as loved objects. ... the child must inherit the life of the parent that requires the child to follow the heterosexual line. Inheritance is usually presented as a social good: ... When parents imagine the life they would like for their child, they are also imagining that they will “give” to the child a gift that becomes socially binding” (Ahmed 2006, p. 92).

In this sense, a queer body and mind is oriented in space, orientation signifies an alignment of the subject with space and society. When a subject’s body is oriented in space, it “fits” in with spaces, furniture, expectations. The queer subject’s body is in this case literally oriented in an unfitting way relative to the way that the heteronormative space of society is constructed. Both in a physical sense as well as normative sense. The queer subject’s body desires and values and tendencies do not line up with the ones of the society. In line with Merleau-Ponty’s view of spatiality and orientation, queer in this sense means slanted or “out of line” in relation to the environment, the queer subject’s body and intentions are odd out, or sticking out by default.

To reiterate, the physical and normative space of Western heteronormative society and its culture has been designed for acts and interactions that are different from how a queer subject would need to or want to conduct themselves in a normative-physical space. It has been designed for the purposes of reproduction and the needs that lead up to it as well as the needs that follow from it. One could say that the space is oriented toward reproduction and its tendencies. These are different needs than those of the queer person and their body. Hence, a queer person grows up socialized in and by a physical-normative environment that does not fit their needs and desires. One that does not fit their orientation.

This physical-normative environment through mutual interaction with the queer person engages in a correction of their “misfit” orientation in said space. What is performed is a certain straightening of the queered “misfit” of a subject and their desires. They are forced to redirect their orientation in a way that it fits the lines of the default normo-physical environment. This can be understood as redirection of desire (as well as body) away from something or somebody that is queer/unfitting and towards the default normo-physical environment, characterized by heteronormative values, directed at reproduction (Ahmed, 2006, p. 84).

The action of such redirection is often unnoticed or close to invisible precisely because the heteronormative space is the default and postulated as the only possible or only natural way to do things and live desires out. It is potent, because it is disguised as neutral. To use Ahmed’s vocabulary, the existing paths and the destinations they lead to are so threaded that they seem like the complete space and the only existing destinations. Whereas really the destinations are unlimited and ways to get to them are open for creation (Ahmed, 2006, p. 39).

It is through this deviation from the prescribed paths and destinations as well as through mis-fitting this pre-existing normo-physical space that the queer subject feels their alienation in the heteronormative Western contemporary society. Alternatively, it is also in being forcefully, albeit inconspicuously redirected from their own “queer” desires and tendencies in virtue of living in the normo-physical space that does not fit them that they are being alienated from their self, their own identity. This is because being alienated from the self and own identity here can be understood as being directed away from it. It is also to be made a stranger in the space that one grows up in (Ahmed 2006, p. 160). It is in this sense of being directed away from their own desires, while simultaneously not fitting the normo-physical default space characterized by heteronormativity and the aim of reproduction that the queer subject does not belong.

CHAPTER 4: HARDCORE BUTCHERY: FETCH THE BOLT CUTTERS

In this chapter, I will elaborate on how queer POC's non-belonging alongside the axis of exclusion from queer communities based on being non-white. I will showcase how homonormativity functions to make queer POC people alienated from the homonormative queer culture. Being "othered" based on the attribute skin color or heritage will play an important role in understanding triangulated non-belonging, as we will later see that the attribute which serves as a basis for exclusion alternates. It is this alternation between attributes or differences and their importance that induces a sense of alienation and results in triangulated non-belonging. In order to understand this multifaceted alienation, we must first understand its individual aspects. In this chapter we start by exclusion from the homonormative culture.

In *Disidentifications* Muñoz asserts that "*identities-in-difference emerge from a failed interpellation within the dominant public sphere. Their emergence is predicated on their ability to disidentify with the mass public [...]*" (Muñoz, 1999, p. 9). By identities-in-difference Muñoz means minoritarian subjects, which in the context of his book means "queers of color" (Muñoz, 1999, p. 9). Muñoz also states that what prevents these people to identify themselves against or with the majoritarian culture is always ideological restrictions present within the community which identifies the subject or which the subject attempts to identify with. This is completely in agreement with the conclusion that I will draw in chapter 5.

Homonormativity simplified is the concept that queerness and being non-white are incompatible. Namely that these are identity-parts that do not coexist in this world and if they do, it is denied by homonormativity. For example, if a person is Black, they cannot be queer because these identities are constructed as separate identities and because they are constructed as mutually exclusive. In this chapter, I will explore one side of the triangle of triangulated

non-belonging, namely the side on which queerness and Being of Color are incompatible and do not coexist. I show the ways in which queerness is not accepted as a possible part of identity when it comes to People of Color in Western majoritarian culture.

Calling such separational external identificatory practices “*monocausal paradigms*” Crenshaw criticizes the tendency to consider blackness only at the expense of feminism, queerness or vice versa. These are reinforced through accounts of *woman* that is exclusively white, or reversely accounts of *Blackness* that is inherently male (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140). To my mind, this creates a problem for the compatibility of Being of Color and queerness as well because queerness inherently plays with assigning new functions to traditional gender roles or simply challenges gender norms in general by omitting the “opposite gender” in romantic relationships.

More directly, mostly male Black critical theorists have asserted that queerness and Blackness do not possibly go together, as if ignoring experiences of masses as well as the fact. Though not without fault, Fanon’s postcolonial critique of the exclusion of Black people and the post-colonial framing of Blackness as an undesirable difference that resulted in the internalization of their self’s own inferiority based on this difference (Blackness). Not only is Blackness constructed by white colonizers (with clear objective to dehumanize) as a significant difference but of course also as “bad” or “inferior” difference. It seems to me that Blackness in Fanon’s critical theory is also already constructed by white colonizers as straight, however Fanon himself does not see past this aspect of the construction and himself adds that there were literally no queer people in Martinique. In a footnote he writes: “*Let us mention in passing that we have never observed the overt presence of homosexuality in Martinique, the reason being the absence of the Oedipal complex in the Antilles*” (Fanon, 1952/1986, pp. 157, n.44). He argues that queerness is an alien value imported from the West to serve the colonizers as yet another mode to manipulate and oppress the indigenous people. Clearly, we can assume that

Fanon does not see Blackness and queerness as compatible within an identity. In his eyes, Blackness presupposes being straight.

Audre Lorde challenges intersectional oppression bi-directionally. Firstly, her interests and struggles are not recognized by the white feminists, as she is a Black woman writer. She makes these observations in the context of talking about her queerness (as a Black lesbian).

“Within the lesbian community I am Black, and within the Black community I am a lesbian. Any attack against Black people is a lesbian and gay issue, ...” (Lorde, 1984, p. 120).

Secondly, she claims that as a Black lesbian poet and writer whenever she decided to write about things that do not read as “Black topics” she is either ignored or frowned upon in the Black writers’ circles. Both her identity and intentions are being questioned by both the majoritarian society and the Black writers’ circles.

“Black writers, ... who step outside the pale of what black writers are supposed to write about, or who black writers are supposed to be, are condemned to silences in black literary circles that are as total and as destructive as any imposed by racism. That is particularly true for black women writers who have refused to be delineated by male-establishment models of femininity, and who have dealt with their sexuality as an accepted part of their identity” (Lorde, 1984, p. 47).

She argues that this is because they are both permeated by racializing ideology and have begotten racist values. These values, obviously misled by claiming there are only certain topics that Black people can write on and these exclude queerness, for one. They also misled

in claiming that if a person is queer (lesbian), their Blackness is irrelevant to their queerness or is at best dismissed and ignored.

Lorde mostly writes about the various aspects of her identity conjointly to provide a thorough intersectional critique of oppression. After all, it is her belief that these issues are inherently interconnected and, therefore ought to be addressed adequately. However, in her biomythography, Lorde also recounts her experiences of dismissal of her Blackness and outright racism in the white lesbian community and feelings of non-belonging specifically as a Black woman in among the white feminist feminists:

*“The fact of our Blackness was an issue that Felicia and I talked about only between ourselves. Even Muriel seemed to believe that, as lesbians, we were all outsiders and all equal in our outsiderhood. ‘We’re all n****s,’ she used to say, and I hated to hear her say it. It was wishful thinking based on little fact”* (Lorde, 1982, p. 226).

Describing a similar experience, Marlon Riggs recounts his time in San Francisco after coming out as a gay man. He describes himself as being lost in a sea of vanilla “savoring the single flavor, one deliberately not his own”.

“[I] pretended not to notice the absence of black images in this new gay life, in bookstores, poster shops, film festivals, my own fantasies. I tried not to notice the few images of blacks that were most popular: joke, fetish, cartoon caricature, or disco diva adored from a distance. Something in Oz, in me, was amiss but I tried not to notice. ... Searching, I found something I didn’t expect, something decades of determined assimilation could not blind me to: in this great gay mecca I was an invisible man; still, I had no shadow, no substance. No history, no place. No reflection. I was an alien, unseen, and seen, unwanted” (Riggs, 1989).

Riggs directly describes the experience as alienating and it is clear that in the homonormative space of San Francisco in the 1980s Blackness was neither accepted nor welcome except for some occasional racist dehumanizing imagery. In this example, the existence of Blackness as potentially a part of queerness is outright denied, leaving the living individuals who are walking proof of the opposite to feel completely displaced, unseen and alone.

In this chapter, we have not only made the case for the fact that being of Color is not accepted in many Western queer communities. What follows is that a strong sense of homonormativity continues to prevail in these communities. I have even shown that queerness and being of Color is many times not seen as a possible unified identity (especially when it comes to Blackness). Such an identity is often partially denied or used as reason for judgement and dismissal. The part that gets singled out as a precarious difference varies based on the context and the (dis)similarity to the community that gets to do the “othering” in these contexts.

CHAPTER 5: THE *DIFFERENCE* THAT CEASED TO BE A KALEIDOSCOPE

So far, we have established that queer POC are alienated along three axes of non-belonging. Just like in my personalized case study, I felt like I do not belong in Vienna, because of homonormativity and in Bratislava, because of heteronormativity. I can definitely relate to Ahmed's concept of disorientation here. These multiple, intersecting environments are where I operate, they are where I get my own sense of "properly oriented", thus a sense of myself as entire (Ahmed, 2006, p. 84). Naturally, I got confused about who I am and where my home is because I was not seen as the entire me anywhere.

Like in my case study, POC queers do not belong in their non-white communities, where queerness is taken to be the relevant identity part and an undesirable difference. Secondly, as non-white in the homonormative queer communities, where the relevant identity part for non-belonging is the not-being-white of the queer person. Here again, not being white constitutes the difference that is relevant and makes the individual an "other". Finally, it is the individual's identity as both a queer and a POC in the western heteronormative white society that determines them as a non-belonging "other". Given that in this context, they do not belong alongside multiple axes, they are more often than not singled out as a complete alien.

Note that it is always the queer POC's difference from every group they operate in that gets singled out as the relevant marker of their identity as one that does not fit with the status quo. This therefore implies:

1. that their externally-constructed identity changes based on the context.
2. that the differences singled out as markers in the external construction of their identity also change based on the context.

This suggests that their (perceived) identity externally constructed by communities they desire to belong to is always constructed as lacking. This lack always consists in dissimilarity with said community. In other words, it is always the difference that is relevant in the individual's external identification as the other. In addition to that, it is always the difference that plays this role of othering albeit, the person's identity stays the same, it is the contexts that change and the relevance of parts of their identity. Although they could be perceived and constructed as similar and subsequently belong, it is the difference that gets marked as relevant.

Therefore, in the following part of the work I will argue that the creation of these differences as relevant precedes the queer POC's self-identification as well as external identification-as-other. For this purpose, I will use Gilles Deleuze's framework. I am using Deleuze's ontology of difference because of its explanatory power. It makes it possible for "difference" to be a normatively neutral concept and for difference to precede identity. This allows me to argue that triangulated non-belonging and the subsequent alienation happens due to the effort of the in-group to self-identify through making the queer POC an outsider in each context.

I argue that queer POC has the following options: Either they accept the external identification as other through the perception of the groups as other and thereby also accept their multifaceted non-belonging. Otherwise, they might want to deny the marked difference and thereby reject part of their identity - a part of themselves in order to belong to the one community that they find themselves to be operating in. In either case, they end up either non-belonging - alienated from the community they wish to be a part of, or denying a part of who they are and being an alien in their own body, mind and self. It seems that no matter their decision they end up lonely in virtue of a deep misunderstanding of who they are by their surroundings.

However, note again that the differences singled out as markers in the external construction of their identity change based on the context. Since these differences that matter are fully context-dependent I argue that the importance of said differences are arbitrary. Therefore, the queer POC's difference from the in-group is also quite arbitrary in that they could very well be seen as similar and therefore part of the group, if only it were their similarities that mattered in the external determining of their identity. That said, what is deemed as "different" and determinant of non-belonging might nevertheless play a role in the individual's self-identification. However, this does not change the fact that internally, the individual does not see any of these attributes as "difference", even less so as a negatively charged difference.

Perhaps, the individual does not see any of these attributes as particularly special in their self-identification, although this might be the case. Not more relevant than, say, their affinity to playing football. If they do, part of the reason for this might be exactly the learned framing of these attributes as relevant for their identity formation. Be it one way or another, the point still stands that the queer POC would not automatically identify these attributes as a "difference" that ought to be seen as negative. This is something that is externally imposed.

Since the relevance of the differences over the similarities in identity determination is arbitrary and changes from context to context, these differences cannot be inherently relevant. The question poses itself, then, why should it be that difference is relevant and what determines which attributes will be framed as relevant differences in various contexts. To my mind, it is not the identity of the queer POC that presents the in-group with differences that the in-group then proceeds to notice and point out but rather the difference is actively created as relevant and negative by the in-group due to the desire to "other" and single out the individual as non-belonging.

In the following part of the work, I will argue that the creation of these differences as relevant precedes the queer POC's self-identification. Creation of these "relevant" differences is also external, an identification of the queer POC by the in-group as an outsider. I will use Gilles Deleuze's ontology of difference as preceding identity from Difference and Repetition. Subsequently, I will argue that what precedes difference as relevant is the intention of the in-group to self-identify through othering queer POC.

From difference and Repetition Deleuze asserts that difference precedes identity and that the only aspect of reality that is truly endlessly recurring is difference. Deleuze postulates difference as the virtual unfolds into the actual through the influence of active forces (creative, affirmative of difference) to create novelty. From this process, a new identity arises.

Deleuze argues:

"It is not difference which presupposes opposition but opposition which presupposes difference, and far from resolving difference by tracing it back to a foundation, opposition betrays and distorts it. Our claim is not only that difference in itself is not 'already' contradiction, but that it cannot be reduced or traced back to contradiction, ... On what condition is difference traced or projected on to a flat space? Precisely when it has been forced into a previously established identity, ... which makes it reflect or desire identity, and necessarily takes it where identity wants it to go - namely, into the negative." (Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, p. 74,)

In other words, Deleuze rejects *difference* as a consequential negative relationship derived from various identities. Deleuze also rejects *difference* as derived from representational philosophical thought. He argues that difference is not what arises in comparison of two entities with identities. It does not arise in the process of negation of "I am not that" or "this is not me, because unlike me...". Instead, Deleuze scratches this and asserts that in the beginning, there

was *difference*. A lot of *difference*. This *difference* is the fabric of all being and therefore, subsequently any identity.

He argues that it is *difference* that ontologically precedes both identity and representation as the most primary unit of existence. Deleuze conceptualizes this creative multiplicity as *difference-in-itself*. This is because he sees difference as the most primary creative, generative and active force which breeds anything and everything. Paradoxically, the only thing that all existing has in common is precisely *difference*. It is only through the active affirmation of the difference that novelty enters the picture. Indeed, then all identity then arises from categorization and compartmentalization of *difference*. Identity is then an effect of difference. We arrive at identity through retrospectively stabilizing *difference* into unique individual entities. Not the other way around.

Deleuze argues, difference is behind everything, but behind difference there is nothing (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, ch. 1). I argue that this also pertains to the following findings:

1. the externally-constructed identity of queer POC changes based on the context.
2. that the differences singled out as markers in the external construction of queer POC identity also change based on the context.

We can assert that *difference* in the Deleuzean sense of multiplicity and infinite variety is the base line. It is not special in the case of queer POC individuals. Difference and multiplicity of difference is the very fabric of life. It is the starting point for any and every identity construction. It is through the choice and reaffirmation of this difference over that as relevant or important that serves as identity creation. In the case of queer POC it is the

compartmentalization and categorization of difference, through specifically queerness and Color as relevant that results in the construction of identity as “other” and subsequently non-belonging.

What fuels this categorization of the *difference* over another remains to be answered. From Deleuze’s framework an easy answer could be provided: it is our repetitive compartmentalization of queerness and Color into “relevant” categories and our misconception that they are primary rather than habitual representations that matter to us that in our minds constitutes them as “real” differences. What we have constructed is actually queerness as a relevant difference and Color as a relevant difference. And through them we construct individuals’ identities through these singled out - constructed-as-relevant-difference differences queer POC as other and non-belonging.

To my mind, there is another reason why it is queerness and Color that are constructed as differences that matter to the process of external identity creation. It is the need to create an outsider identity of the queer POC. This allows for subsequent non-belonging of that individual. In other words, the need of the in-group to construct the identity of the queer POC as *other* and not us is the motivation. This is done in order to fuel the construction of the queerness and skin color as a difference that matters. It is to establish first, that you are different; second, that you are different, not like us, other. Consequently, the identity of the group can be reaffirmed FROM this seemingly real difference of the queer POC. Whereas what really goes on is an arbitrary representation and habitual compartmentalization of the individual by the in-group. Therefore, it is the egotistic need to assign identity on the part of the in-group for itself and for the queer POC that leads to the queer POC’s exclusion and non-belonging. It is only by understanding the non-belonging as triangulated that we can draw the conclusion that excluding the queer POC is motivated by the need for self-identification. Only because the

queer POC is excluded on three axes, where for each axis the difference (attribute) that matter alternates, can we say that these differences are arbitrary and therefore constructed.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: TRYING THE THREADS OF NON-BELONGING BACK TOGETHER

This paper examined the ways in which double minority identities induce feelings of alienation through facilitated multilayered non-belonging. Specifically, I have focused on queer POC and their clash with communities they encounter. This encounter produces a fabrication of difference based on the need to “other” the individual and strengthen in-group identity. I argue that being othered based on different characteristics in different contexts, in communities to which the queer POC individuals attempt to relate to, non-belonging and subsequent alienation from the self and the respective communities follow. Such an encounter, I have argued is threefold:

Firstly, the queer POC, interacts with the majority culture and comes against the wall of misunderstanding and underrepresentation. The first layer of non-belonging. Secondly, a queer POC comes against a wall, interacting with the homonormativity of the queer community. As argued, queerness is only accepted in certain form and shape, that often excludes POC and their way of being queer. This facilitates the second layer of non-belonging. Lastly, the queer POC feels non-belonging as they are excluded from their ethnic communities on the basis of being queer. This finalizes the scheme of multifaceted non-belonging and results in alienation along three axes felt towards the queer POC’s communities and towards the self.

Finally, I have argued that the differences, based on which the queer POC are excluded, are created in real time by the respective communities. With alternating environments and communities, the difference that “matters” also alternates. Therefore, the attributes are not “real differences” but are “constructed differences” that serve the purpose of “othering”. Hence, the main motivation to fabricate difference through falsely presuming an identity and

compartmentalizing difference into the identity categories is an attempt to construct an in-group identity.

Key claims stemming from my conceptual analysis of triangulated non-belonging are as follows. Firstly, we have established that the alienation that queer POC experience is unique and specific precisely because it happens across three different axes simultaneously all the while, acting on the individual's mental state with potential effects on self-acceptance as a human being in its wholeness. This is more than just clashing with certain communities that one comes across because in this case the whole mode of being in the world and the ability to participate in life are severely diminished.

Secondly, we have shown that the alienation that the queer POC experiences on a daily basis is not simply just exclusion from a group but is also spatial, therefore physical and emotional. This means that the alienation is multilayered across yet another dimension.

Since we have found that the difference which matters alternates based on context and based on the group that does the excluding-othering, we have derived that this difference or attribute that matters is arbitrary. Hence it only matters insofar as it matters for the group that is doing the othering. In other words, it is not the difference (attribute) that truly matters. Using Deleuze's ontology of difference, we have made the claim that the difference as important is socially constructed as a device to establish and affirm in-group identity through othering the queer POC. It is then the intention to other the individual that is behind identifying them as different rather than similar. Making the queer seem queerer than queer even in places where queerness ought to feel like home.

The implications of such a mode of being are extremely far reaching, as seemingly queer POC are not allowed to feel like they belong anywhere, including any community they might have potentially felt at home in, their own body and worst of all, not even in their own sense identity as a whole person. Queer communities exclude them based on their heritage or

skin color but they cannot relate to their heritage without obstruction either because after all, they are queer, which as we have established, can be largely problematic, too. A question remains to be answered, namely whether there even is a place for double-minority people like queer POC in the heteronormative world laced with racializing ideology. And if so, how can they relate to anyone including themselves in a world that was not made for them.

To my mind, the best attempt at answering such a question is the process of *disidentification* offered by Muñoz. In a world where the dominant culture excludes you, erases you and gives you the finger, you compliment the nail polish and use it to paint your own middle finger, alternatively, to craft posters rallying to fight for your freedom and your right to live and breathe. Because although they make it seem like the world is not a place for queer POC, for people like us, really, it has always been ours. It has always been yours and mine, too. Though it might be dangerous (do not try this at home! ...just kidding, please, do) we ought to start acting like it.

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