

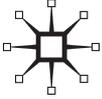
QUEERING MIGRATIONS
TOWARDS, FROM, AND
BEYOND ASIA

Edited by

Hugo Córdova Quero, Joseph N. Goh, and

Michael Sepidoza Campos

palgrave
macmillan



QUEERING MIGRATIONS TOWARDS, FROM, AND BEYOND ASIA

Copyright © Hugo Córdoba Quero, Joseph N. Goh, and Michael Sepidoza Campos, 2014.

All rights reserved.

First published in 2014 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN®

in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Where this book is distributed in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world,
this is by Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited,
registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills,
Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies
and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States,
the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN: 978–1–137–44772–2

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Queering migrations towards, from, and beyond Asia / edited by
Hugo Córdoba Quero, Joseph N. Goh and Michael Sepidoza Campos.
pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978–1–137–44772–2 (alk. paper)

1. Gay immigrants—Asia. 2. Gays—Asia. 3. Gays—Identity.
4. Immigrants—Cultural assimilation. 5. Asia—Emigration and
immigration—Social aspects. I. Quero, Hugo Córdoba. II. Goh,
Joseph N., 1971– III. Campos, Michael Sepidoza, 1971–

HQ76.3.A78Q44 2014

306.76'6095—dc23

2014013511

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by Newgen Knowledge Works (P) Ltd., Chennai, India.

First edition: October 2014

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

INTRODUCTION

TRANS/PACIFIC AFFAIRS: QUEER-JOURNEYERS IN SEARCH OF NEW LIAISONS

*Hugo Córdova Quero, Joseph N. Goh, and
Michael Sepidoza Campos*

Problematizing Migration in Asian Contexts

Many regard the twenty-first century as *the* century of migration. Technology, the rise of regional economies,¹ and the decentering of global powers have all contributed to population shifts that witness to the growth and multiplication of urban centers around the world. According to the United Nations Organization (2013), there are about 232 million migrants living outside their home countries. In recent years, migration issues have been complicated by the subversion of migratory movements to the industrialized West. This is particularly true in Asia where an increasing number of migrants have redirected their movements “laterally,” for example, to nearby Asian countries rather than to the United States and/or to Europe. To date, we discern migratory patterns arising from:

- individuals who move from other regions to Asian countries
- individuals/communities who move or are displaced within Asia
- individuals from Asian countries who migrate to the Americas, Europe, or Australia

These migratory trends attest not only to shifting economic and political policies, but also reorient the ways identities are negotiated and constituted. To the same degree that migrations affect societies, so too do they reconstitute presumably stable anthropological paradigms.

Creating lives that contour the margins of nations and economies, these migrants queer a vision of the human that complicates the ways genders, cultures, values, languages, and socioeconomic narratives interact. Migrating bodies strategize subjectivity—constantly redefining the limits of ethnicity in one’s national belonging, the relationship of gender with economic access, the potency of sexuality to subvert/affirm social values. These negotiations not only expose transnational conditions but also illuminate intuitions that reorient mechanisms for meaning-making as well.

This book explores the intersection of migration and queerness as they relate to ethnic/racial identity constructions, immigration processes and legal status, the formation of trans/national or trans/cultural partnerships, families and/or love-friendships, and the roles that religious identities/values/worldviews play in the fortification/critique of queer migrant identities. Queer migrants are those who transgress normative gender and sexual boundaries through their movements, and along with it a gamut of attendant intersecting issues. These essays explore assumptions of heteronormativity, gender role expectations, sexual identities, body configurations, and political practices utilized by individuals and group agency. Rather than considering “queer migrants” as an homogeneous population, this book hopes to expose the diversity of power relations, ideological or praxis divergences, and sexual particularities that contour the shape of twenty-first-century migrant lives.

By paying close attention to the relationships, value systems, and sociopolitical processes that contribute to the emergence of queer migrant subjects, the book examines the strategies of belonging, resistance, and assimilation that queer migrants deploy in host societies. We highlight the daily life experiences of migrants themselves, if possible, through case studies, interviews, and/or ethnographic research. In order to hold in tension the specificity of context with broader questions of identity and location, we address—in one way or another—four essential themes throughout each chapter:

- a. We analyze the complex world of *migration* that cuts across, to, and beyond Asia to situate individuals in their manifold circumstances.
- b. We explore the ambivalence of *race/ethnicity* to expose the postcolonial pressure that impacts queer migrants who straddle national, cultural, religious/value systems, and ethnic locations around the world.
- c. We illuminate narratives of *Otherness* as the condition of—and critical lens through which we trace—the connubial of migration, race/ethnicity, postcoloniality, and gender/sexuality.
- d. Finally, we take into account and problematize the religious beliefs and experiences of queer immigrants whose lives are supported and

invigorated by the transcendental connection with the spiritual realm and communities of faith.

The goal of this introduction is to offer preliminary referential information based on those four areas in order to contextualize the chapters in this anthology. Therefore, we elaborate on each theme as follows:

Migration

Migrant bodies thrive at the edge of belonging and expulsion. Migration evokes simultaneous movements of departure (to *emigrate* from one's native home) and arrival (to *immigrate* to a new home). Rather than allude to place—and the stability this guarantees—migration speaks of in-between moments, of departures and arrivals that elude landing. For migrants, the quickest resolution to the threat of instability has often been through assimilation. Larry Ray (2004) explains:

Originally developed by the Chicago School, assimilation refers to the process by which outsiders (especially migrants) give up their distinctive culture and adopt the cultural norms of the host society. This was typically thought to occur among second-generation migrants. There is no single model of assimilation but the concept was closely related to the “melting pot” metaphor used by Robert Park in relation to the United States, an anticipated result of which was a diminution of ethnic and racial divisions. Although often regarded as a “one-way” process, assimilation actually attempted to understand how heterogeneous societies develop through the reciprocal cultural interpenetration and adaptation of many different groups. The end result would then be a society in which a uniform cultural identity (for example “the [North-]American”) would reflect the merging of diverse cultural and religious ingredients (24).

For many countries, assimilation defined migration policies, delineating the limits through which migrants can negotiate levels of belonging in civic space. Ray (2004) continues explaining:

Modern forms of organization, including urbanization, the market, mass culture, and universal education, were driving assimilation. Later theories in the 1960s developed more nuanced models. Gunnar Myrdal emphasized the contrast between American ideals of equality and the practice of racial discrimination, which he hoped would be overcome through the democratic political process. Milton Gordon developed a model of seven types of assimilation (cultural, structural, marital, identificational, attitudinal, behavioral, and civic) that need not always coincide. More recently the theory has been

criticized on many grounds. These include failing to address structural racism, a deterministic and unilinear evolutionary logic, the persistence of religious and ethnic differences in modern societies, and existence of globalized transnational communities (24).

For many countries, assimilation has traditionally defined migration policies by establishing the limits through which new arriving immigrants can negotiate their belonging in the civic space. The image of the *Melting Pot* is a key metaphor in assimilationism. Many countries throughout the Americas sought to unify (uniform) waves of migrants into a single collective. In many cases, this proved impossible as Allan G. Johnson (1995) explains:

Inspired by the title of Israel Zangwill's 1909 play about life in America, melting pot is a concept referring to the common but faulty belief that ethnic and racial groups in the United States have joined together to form a common and national identity. This has been true to a considerable degree of European immigrants whose cultures and racial background are relatively similar to the dominant Anglo population and its culture. The ghettoization and oppression of minority groups, however, coupled with the rapid growth of the nonwhite, non-English-speaking population, perpetuates racial and ethnic divisions, especially in large metropolitan areas such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles (174).

Although still a goal for many societies, the melting pot image has of late been challenged and reframed by a gradual movement towards multiculturalism. However, the pervading hegemony of assimilationism still persists.

The assimilationist school functions out a theory of sameness that blurs distinct characteristics that render a migrant body differentiated from the host. Michael Omi and Howard Winant coined the phrase *immigrant analogy* (1986, 17) to distinguish the integration of European Americans from other groups. Vilna Bashi and Antonio McDaniel (1997) further describe the *immigrant analogy* as:

The classic model of assimilation [that] assumes that immigrants arrive with a relative disadvantage vis-à-vis European Americans and that they are culturally distant and distinct. The immigrant group is assumed to have the potential to be like the native-born or majority group. The passage of time brings increasing education and economic opportunities that facilitate the withering of ethnic differences, and socioeconomic advancement translates into social mobility and integration. The idea of an American "melting pot" is a characterization of the classic model of assimilation (668).

Within this framework, the standard of assimilation in the US is an implicitly *European* iteration of the "American" ideal. It would be easier to assimilate a

white, English-speaking body onto the national *corpus* than one who looked altogether “other” in terms of culture, ethnicity, and language. This perspective still inspires sectors of society that see migrants as disruptions to the *American way of life*, interlopers who must be integrated into the *American dream*. Robert Ezra Park (1950) and Gunnar Myrdal (1962) are major proponents of these policies. Assimilationism has been long used to measure the lives and achievements of migrants. One is expected to *acculturate*, to dispense with one’s cultural home and ascribe to the cultural norms of one’s host country. Gualtiero Harrison (2003) elaborates:

Deriving from the word “culture,” the term “acculturation” indicates the processes of transformation and adaptation which take place within cultures when two or more groups—each of which has specific cultural and behavioral models—enter into relations with one another...Today the term “acculturation” essentially refers to the phenomena of adaptation and transformation which derive from situations of conflict between different cultures, the settling of various cultural groups in a common territory as a result of the so-called “great migration” (to the USA in the nineteenth century) and the increased exchange of communications which has led to the creation of the “global village” (1).

The process of acculturation implies the existence of a dominant culture to which all others must subscribe. Within this framework, US culture holds place of primacy. It is the cultural standard that extends beyond national boundaries. Indeed, these standards were mirrored in Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil when they adopted laws similar to US immigration policies in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Such policies made it efficient for many European families to choose multiple destinations of migration, some to the United States and others to Argentina and other South American countries (Córdova Quero 1999, 16). The *American dream* was replicated around the world, benefitting specifically white, European bodies, while leaving other migrants to languish beneath a pervading racism and xenophobia that scaffolded assimilationist policies.

It is important to assert that while contemporary trends no longer privilege the United States as the primary focus of migration, assumptions around what is considered “successful” versus “failed” migration continue to hedge against the assimilationist model worldwide. This has certainly been the case in Asia as migrants increasingly move *out of, through, and into* Asia at multiple points of entry. Within these contexts, successful assimilation sometimes implies movement towards invisibility, absorption into the homogenous collective. However, as several chapters in this anthology will illustrate, it is *difference*—not the narrative of sameness at work in invisibility—that often serves as the currency for successful integration. As migration intensifies,

distinctions between migrant and host blur, making it necessary to reimagine, reconstitute—or even reject—the melting pot ideal.

The essays in this book contest assimilationism as a way to judge the agency of migrants in host countries. The authors in this book point toward adaptation, multiculturalism, and identity negotiation as strategies for queer migrants in order to (re)fashion cultural assumptions and embrace new and creative ways of queer performativity.

Race and Ethnicity

Migration narratives inevitably rub against questions of nation and citizenship. This requires us to acknowledge the problematics of *racial formations*. Racial identities are constructed on the binary of *us-them*, *native-other*. These categories are socially, historically, and geographically constructed, buoying the stability of nation. Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1986) state:

We use the term *racial formation* to refer to the process by which social, economic and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meanings. Crucial to this formulation is the treatment of race as a *central axis* of social relations which cannot be subsumed under or reduce to some broader category or conception (61–62; emphasis in the original).

Because these constructions are ideologically inspired, real people are forcibly fit within these paradigms. Furthermore, racial formations reflect the national imagination of a given context and so are *specific* to geography, history, culture, and politics. Race is thus anything but static, reflecting instead the very construction of culture. Indeed, Omi and Winant (1986) observe that:

A striking feature of race relations in the lowland areas of Latin America since the abolition of slavery has been the relative absence of sharply defined racial groupings. No such rigid descent rule characterizes racial identity in many Latin American societies. Brazil, for example, has historically had less rigid conceptions of race, and thus a variety of “intermediate” racial categories exist. Indeed, as [Marvin] Harris notes, “One of the most striking consequences of the Brazilian system or racial identification is that parents and children and even brothers and sisters are frequently accepted as representatives of quite opposite racial types.” Such a possibility is incomprehensible within the logic of racial categories in the US (61).²

While race and ethnicity are negotiable, however, both remain beholden to trajectories of categorization that differentiate migrant from host bodies. Omi and Winant (1986, 62) express this dramatically: “Without a racial identity, one is in danger of having no identity.”

Among “foreign” bodies, there are shades of differences that determine one’s ability to integrate. For example, the incorporation of a wealthy transnational will be vastly different from that of an impoverished refugee. As migrants, however, both will never enjoy full participation, given the logic of differences that forever situates one as an outsider. Assimilation is a fantasy, an unreachable ideal. According to Bashi and McDaniel (1997, 671), racial formations will always need an “ideal-typical” *Other*, which reinforces and reifies the *us-them* binary.

Racial formations are a common feature in every society, but especially so in typically monoethnic or monoracial ones like Japan (Weimer 1997), Korea (Pai 2000), or Sweden (Pred 2000). Within these contexts, “purity” remains the standard to which one assimilates. However, it also stands as an illusory ideal, exposing the everyday negotiations around sameness/difference to which both migrant and host are condemned. As our succeeding chapters will illustrate, the fantasy of a *pure racial/ethnic identity* alludes less to cultural integrity, as pointing to intermixing and/or hybridity as necessary scaffolding for cultural stability.

As both a concept and term, *hybridity* originated in postcolonial studies. In this book, we understand both *hybridity* and *hybrid spaces* as points of intersectionality as well as places for creativity and negotiation. We believe it is necessary to trace the term’s multiple layers in order to understand its importance for our studies. According to Homi Bhabha (1995),

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the “pure” and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the reevaluation of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination (34).

In other words, *hybridity* signifies the performativity of categorization, differentiating “pure” from “impure” bodies. More than just the imposition of categories over powerless subjects, however, hybridity demands gestures of resistance that disrupt the flow of power. Bhabha (1995) affirms this when he talks about the ambivalence of the colonial space:

If the effect of colonial power is seen to be the *production* of hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions, then an important change of perspective occurs. It reveals the ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority and enables a form of subversion, founded on that uncertainty, that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention (35).

Following this logic, *hybridization* simultaneously becomes the *locus* of colonial power as well as the performance of resistance. In his essay “Culture’s In-Between” (1996), Bhabha further explains that:

Strategies of hybridization reveal an estranging movement in the “authoritative,” even authoritarian inscription of the cultural sign. At the point at which the precept attempts to objectify itself as a generalized knowledge or a normalizing, hegemonic practice, the hybrid strategy or discourse opens up a space of negotiation where power is unequal but its articulation may be equivocal. Such negotiation is neither assimilation nor collaboration. It makes possible the emergence of an “interstitial” agency that refuses the binary representation of social antagonism (58).

In examining a particular case of *hybridity* among homosexuals in 1990s’ Taiwan, Tan Chong Kee notices not only the twofold process of Bhabha’s analysis but also discerns hybridizing impulses *within* culture itself. Tan (2001) reflects thus:

I feel that Bhabha’s notion of hybridization focuses too much on the colonizer and theorizes it merely as a process that subverts an external colonizing force. While acknowledging that hybridization does have this effect, I want to also emphasize how it enables a creative renegotiation of local cultural norms (124).

Hybridity functions, therefore, as a power (re)negotiation that exposes hidden colonial dynamics in social structures. This exchange is neither conscious nor voluntary. It is a consequence of interactions engaged within intricate networks of power relations. These relations situate migrants along an ongoing process of hybridization that varies across time and space. Thus, hybridization queers presumably static binaries of us-them, migrant-host, allowing migrants to deploy native cultural practices to resist the weight of compulsive assimilation. The result is unique; it echoes what Mikhail Bakhtin (2004) stated:

Hybrid is not only double-voiced and doubled-accented...but is also double-linguaged; for in it there are not only (and not even so much) two individual consciousness, two voices, two accents, as there are [doublings of] socio-linguistic, consciousness, two epochs...that come together and consciously fight it out of the territory of utterance...It is the collision between differing points of view on the world that are embedded in these forms...such unconscious hybrids have been at the same time profoundly productive historically: they are pregnant with potential for new world views, with new “internal forms” for perceiving the world in words (360).

More than an effect of—or resolution to—the double-edged sword of migration/assimilation, hybridity illuminates an unfolding process. In the context of their host countries, migrants are perennially modified through interactions with the dominant culture. But such modifications arise out of a multiplicity of interactions that reshape the nature and context of hospitality itself. Migrant bodies recontour boundaries of nation, blurring the difference between guest and host. Negotiation becomes the currency of engagement. García Canclini explores this exchange in his book *Hybrid Cultures* (1995):

The increase in processes of hybridization makes it evident that we understand very little about power if we only examine confrontations and vertical actions. Power would not function if it were exercised only by bourgeoisie over proletarians, whites over indigenous people, parents over children, the media over receivers. Since all these relations are interwoven with each other, each one achieves an effectiveness that it would never be able to by itself. But it is not simply a question of some forms of domination being superimposed on others and thereby being strengthened. What gives them their efficacy is the obliqueness that is established in the fabric. How can we discern where ethnic power ends and where family power begins, or the borders between political and economic power? Sometimes it is possible, but what is most important is the shrewdness with which the cables are mixed, and secret orders passed and responded to affirmatively (259).

Ultimately, hybridity tugs at the inner, existential spaces of migrant life where power engagements echo the more fundamental question about what it means to be one's self. Individuals resolve to *become* self through the constant interplay of identity negotiations that take into account personal and societal histories, family traditions, ethnicity, religious beliefs, gender orientations, and the like. In other words, individuals *be/come* as opposed to *be/ing*, which implies a fixed state of selfhood. Hybridity makes it impossible to maintain *either/or* categories (binary oppositions) as identity thrives at the intersection of multiple (re)negotiations particular to each individual but never the same for two individuals. That intersection, that interstitial space, is the womb from where hybridity enfolds agency and gives birth to *be/coming* ever-negotiated identities.

Construction of Otherness and the Postcolonial Condition

The term *Otherness* is key to understanding the power dynamics that operate within racial formations, ethnic interactions, and migratory experiences. The term can be traced to Jean-Paul Sartre who in 1944 deconstructed the category “Jew” as *Other* to the so-called “anti-Semite,” at a time when the

Nazi regime reached the peak of its power. Put another way, the “Jew,” says Sartre, is a construction of those who identify as “anti-Semite” (1948, 69). Two decades later, Frantz Fanon (1967) embarked on a similar analysis of the category “negro”³ when confronted with the reality of Martinique and French colonialism. Fanon exposed the symbiotic construction and reification of the categories “white” and “negro” as corollaries to the Other (217). Recent works in ethnic studies have focused on the deconstruction of racial formations in relation to the construction of *Otherness*, a term that originated in phenomenology through Hegel (Goldberg and Solomos 2002, 23). Common through all these studies is the agreement that constructions of racial/ethnic categories are situated in a symbiotic relationality that emphasizes *alterity*. Following Jacques Lacan (1977), we deploy the term *Other/s* as a mirror subject of the one that defines them as *alter*.

Within postcolonial studies, the construction of otherness refers specifically to subaltern/dominated positions. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s canonical essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988), is perhaps the most important discussion on the topic. From the very beginning, the term *subaltern* draws us to the problematics of power. The term does not originate from Spivak, however. Rather, she alludes to Antonio Gramsci who, in his *Prison Notebooks* (1971), uses the Italian *subalterno* to address the proletariat (222). It was the “Subaltern Studies” collective that expanded the understanding “to include all oppressed groups such as the peasantry, millworkers, women, ‘tribal’ people” (Poddar 2001, 425). Subaltern is now commonly used to refer to those who live in a state of oppression or whose voices/rights are silenced/neglected.

Spivak’s basic argument lies in the issue of subaltern (mis)representation. The term *representation* is contested not only in postcolonial studies but also in social and cultural studies in general. Edward Said (1978) affirms that any representation cannot actually offer a realistic depiction:

In any instance of at least written language, there is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a *re-presence*, or a representation. The value, efficacy, strength, apparent veracity of a written statement about the Orient therefore relies very little, and cannot instrumentally depend, on the Orient as such. On the contrary, the written statement is a presence to the reader by virtue of its having excluded, displaced, made supererogatory any such *real thing* as “the Orient” (21; emphasis in the original).

In other words, what is re-presented is in fact elaborated, thus not properly “showing” the real subject. The construction of Otherness occurs out of an ideology that systematically puts people “in their place.” For example, representing *the Other/s* as “uneducated migrants” alludes to racist and

xenophobic ideologies that diminish the potential and contribution of those migrants to the host society.

Drawing from Marx and his work *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (1907),⁴ Spivak (1988) brings into the analysis the distinction between two German philosophical concepts: *Vertreten*, which she defines as “‘represent’ in the first sense,” and *Darstellen*, or “‘represent’ in the second sense” (70). She states that the first one functions as “proxy” while the second concept functions as “substitution” (71). Why was it important for Spivak to uphold this linguistic distinction? Because it is related not only to the way that capitalism—in Marxist terms, the economic system that (re)produces colonial oppression—produces the other/s but also to the way that nation-states and individuals are constituted in that system. Spivak (1988) states thus:

The relationship between global capitalism (exploitation in economics) and nation-state alliances (domination in geopolitics) is so macrollogical that it cannot account for the micrological texture of power. To move toward such an accounting one must move toward theories of ideology—of subject formations that micrologically and often erratically operate the interests that congeal the macrolgies. Such theories cannot afford to overlook the category of representation—its scene of writing, its *Darstellung*—dissimulated the choice of and need for “heroes,” paternal proxies, agents of power—*Vertretung*. My view is that radical practice should attend to this double session of representations rather than reintroduce the individual subject through totalizing concepts of power and desire (74).

In other words, we need to keep in mind that when we talk about representation in postcolonial theory and in relation to Spivak’s writing, we refer to the power (self-attributed by the colonizer) to speak for *Other/s* (proxy function) as well as her/his (self-attributed) right to construct (substitution—the function of portraying) those *Other/s*.

While Spivak and Homi Bhabha construct the postcolonial condition as a representation of the imperial center, our essays illuminate the constant de/recentering of empire when migrant bodies reorient the direction of their movements. Indeed, constructions of Otherness—and the subaltern positionality of the *Other/s*—are clearly present in the lives and experiences of queer migrants who move to, from, and beyond Asia, a geographical region that technically resides at the empire’s periphery. What emerges in their engagement is either a disruption of imperial power or the expansion of the postcolonial condition.

The logic of *Otherness* thrives out of practices of resistance. Our essays assert that regardless of the seeming hopelessness of their circumstances, queer migrants resist assimilation by enacting performative mimicry. As a

concept of identity, *mimicry* is defined by Bhabha (1984) as a gesture of Lacanian *camouflage*. He elegantly states thus:

The effect of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing. For in “normalizing” the colonial state or subject, the dream of post-Enlightenment civility alienates its own language of liberty and produces another knowledge of its norms....It is from this area between mimicry and mockery, where the reforming, civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double, that my instances of colonial imitation come. What they all share is a discursive process by which the excess or slippage produced by the ambivalence of mimicry (almost the same, *but not quite*) does not merely “rupture” the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a “partial” presence. By “partial” I mean both “incomplete” and “virtual.” It is as if the very emergence of the “colonial” is dependent for its representation upon some strategic limitation or prohibition within the authoritative discourse itself. The success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace (126–127; emphasis in the original).

For Bhabha, mimicry succeeds when the colonizer is exposed as one who pretends, camouflaging the untenability of her/his hold on power. For example, when the colonizer postures about “civilization” in order to impose its language (English) and waxes eloquent about “humanism” in order to “dehumanize” and “barbarize” the Other/s, the colonizer actually exposes the instability of the colonial structure. Bhabha offers a narrative of this in his analysis of the case of evangelical Anglican missionary, Charles Grant (1984, 127–128). Sanjiv Kumar (2011) elaborates on this:

In postcolonial studies “mimicry” is considered as unsettling imitations that are characteristic of postcolonial cultures. It is a desire to sever the ties with “self” in order to move towards “other.”...However, most of the postcolonial critics agree that it is precisely mimicry that disrupts the colonial discourse by *double vision, double articulation* or the *forked tongue*. Bhabha finds mimicry to be characterized by indeterminacy and a sign of double articulation. The dichotomy between “self” and “Other” being most striking feature of colonial discourse, he justifies mimicry of the “Other” because, for a colonial, “Other” visualizes power (119).

The binary of *self-Other/s* parallels the Hegelian dialectic of *Master-Slave*. Within this dialectic, the dyad mutually (re)creates and (re)constructs each other in order to define what the other is *not*.

In this constant exchange of (re)creation, there is the impulse to camouflage. What happens to the colonized body? Confronted by the weight of

colonialism, the colonized *mimics* the colonizer, imitating the master's language and manners, thus exposing the arbitrariness of self—and that of the entire colonial enterprise. Bhabha is right to relate mimicry to the civilizing mission as “human and not wholly human” (1984, 126). From the perspective of the colonized subject, mimicry functions to expose the artifice of the colonial master. In order to mimic the colonizer—or hegemonic ideology, or normative traditions and customs, and so on—one abandons any notion of an originary cultural, ethnic, and personal identity. All is fake, a perennial misrepresentation. Recognizing the hollowness of self, the colonized gleans the master's (mis)representation of both *self* and *Other*.

As a strategy of assimilation and resistance, mimicry offers the migrant body the ability to engage—and so negate—categories of *Otherness*. Subscribing to dreams of inclusion, the migrant mimics the host, destabilizing the presumed stability of nation and empire. One fosters an illusion—a hoped-for assimilation—if only to provide the migrant body temporary relief from the undulations of diaspora.

Recognizing and Problematizing Religion

Social thinkers in the nineteenth century—Émile Durkheim and Marx Weber among many—decreed the “death” of religion when they articulated the “secularization hypothesis.” They thought that with increasing industrialization, human beings would lose interest in religion (Norris and Inglehart 2004, 3), completely secularizing societies. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, however, scholars reflect a different situation where religion constitutes a lesser state of technological progress for human society (Stark, Iannacone, and Finke 1996, 433). Contrary to the predictions of the nineteenth-century social thinkers, migrants in industrialized societies are taking their religions and beliefs with them, refashioning new communities, new spiritualities (Norris and Inglehart 2004, 3–4), and invigorating dying religious organizations in those countries (Córdova Quero 2008; Hirshman 2004, 1207).

Notwithstanding, queer migrants face a double—and sometimes conflictive—situation. On the one hand, commitment to a faith strengthens migrants as they attempt to survive and thrive in the host society. Many of those situations imply economic hardships, varied forms of discrimination, or internal emotional issues. On the other side, because of their sexual orientation, queer migrants confront religious discourses and praxes that magnify violence and discrimination based on particular interpretations of sacred scriptures and dogma. More often, bullying and discrimination against queer individuals are rooted in teachings learned either from pulpits or through the culturally ingrained values related to issues such as same-sex

marriage. Although those situations tend to disempower queer migrants, the chapters in this book attest to the agency and creative ways through which queer migrants are destabilizing societal dictums while refurbishing new identities and spaces in the host society.

Queering Asia: Holding the Center and Periphery

The following chapters invite us to listen: to stand before a cacophony of voices, to endure dissonances of experiences, and discern harmony amidst the babble of dislocations. The authors, informants, and theorists who embody this collective are bound by the shared narratives of *Asia* and *queerness*. On their own, “Asia” and “queer” articulate expansive and unwieldy concepts. Rather than function as categories of identification, therefore, Asia and queer echo resonances of engagement. Working in tandem with—and sometimes in contradiction to—one another, Asia and queer offer a conceptual framework for the reflections, analyses, stories, and critiques offered by each essay. Together, we hold in tension the specificity of individual experiences along with the larger questions of selfhood and civic engagement that undergird migrant life.

Towards Asia

In the opening chapter, “Should I Stay or Should I Go? Sexual Preferences and Migration,” Jamie Paquin utilizes primary interviews and secondary sources to trace the ways racial sexual preferences/aversions shape migratory decisions of worldly, urban-based Japanese and non-Japanese. Exploring trends in sexual tourism, trafficking, and correspondence relationships, Paquin explores the role of sexual preferences in delineating movement across national borders. More particularly, he locates the role of such preferences/aversions in directing subjects’ decision-making patterns relative to work, study, and place of residence. Paquin devotes part of his research to the evaluation of location vis-à-vis intimate economies that flavor the appeal of a given place. “Foreignness,” in particular, will be considered as a variant strategy in the broader trajectory of migration/assimilation. The personal and political dimensions of racial sexual preferences in the context of migration will be discussed as they emerge from interviewee accounts of their own trajectories, decisions, and experiences. By shedding light on the everyday practice of sexual exchange, Paquin queers the migration narrative.

In the same vein, Hugo Córdoba Quero’s “Made in Brazil? Sexuality, Intimacy, and Identity Formation among Japanese Brazilian Queer Immigrants in Japan” reports on migration/assimilation issues confronted

by Japanese Brazilian queer immigrants. It presents findings from two separate fieldworks conducted among Japanese Brazilian immigrants residing in the Kanto region and the Tokai area in Japan. Critiquing the intersection of sexuality/intimacy along with ethnicity, nationality, and class, the chapter constructs its argument on the roles that desire, intimacy, body/ies, and culture play in migration. Drawing from ethnic and migration studies, Córdova Quero argues that the negotiation of sexuality and the formation of identities among Japanese Brazilian immigrants in Japan are marked by continuous and unequal processes of (re)categorizations, whether self-attributed or exogenously imposed by the dominant Japanese culture.

The third chapter, “Desire, Nation, and Faith: A Roundtable among Emerging Queer Asian/Pacific Islander Religion Scholars,” features a roundtable discussion among members of the research group, Emerging Queer Asian/Pacific Islander Religion Scholars. Michael Sepidoza Campos, Hugo Córdova Quero, Joseph N. Goh, Elizabeth Leung, Miak Siew, and Lai Shan Yip draw from diverse experiences as activists, church leaders, academics, and pastoral workers to trace the contours of an emerging subdiscipline in the broader fields of Asian/Pacific Islander (API) theologies, LGBTIQ studies, queer, and postcolonial theories. They affirm the complicated role of religion in the constitution of socioeconomic, ethnic, cultural, and sexual identities in diaspora. The roundtable discussion specifically focuses on geopolitical issues that affect queer folks who maneuver national and ecclesial contexts.

From and Around Asia

In the fourth chapter, Kunisuke Hirano analyzes the dynamics of racial and sexual minoritization that Japanese migrants endure when moving to the United States. Hirano’s essay, “In Search of Dreams: Narratives of Japanese Gay Men on Migration to the United States,” narrates the experiences of relatively privileged gay students and professionals who come to the United States for further training or education. Among the first things taken away is the security of a familiar language, the certainty of race, and stability of citizenship. What becomes exacerbated is their status as “sexual minorities.” Confronting the challenge of being both “ethnic and sexual minorities”—bereft of access to residency—gay Japanese men renegotiate their position in the social hierarchy *in between* Japan and the United States. The trans-Pacific journey to pursue better opportunities does not unfold to self-emancipation but a shift in one’s position in the social hierarchy. One moves nations, but remains embedded in the narrative of continued minoritization. In a slightly different accent, Romit Dasgupta suggests that queer subjectivities and relationships can—and indeed do—find expression

in surprising spaces, even within the confines of traditional family structures. His essay, “Queer Imaginings and Traveling of ‘Family’ across Asia,” uncovers diverse family arrangements that trump the primacy of the nuclear family model. Childless couples, extended families, shared households, single-parent households offer some examples—whether by choice or necessity—of unconventional, nonnormative family arrangements that have existed historically and continue into the present. One alternative configuration of “family” pertains to households and arrangements involving same-sex members. Drawing on popular and visual cultural texts across a range of societies in East, Southeast and South Asia, Dasgupta explores the notion of “family” before nonnormative, same-sex subjectivities. Dasgupta strategically deploys the label “queer” rather than more restrictive, identity-based terms, “lesbian,” “gay,” or “LGBTIQ.” He argues that articulations of “queer” and “family” work to destabilize and challenge both “Western”-inflected understandings of nonheterosexual subjectivity and assumptions about the seamless heterosexuality of the “family” across Asia.

In the sixth chapter, Joseph N. Goh queers the spiritualities of *mak nyahs* (transgender individuals) who profess Islam in Malaysia. Goh’s “Transgressive Empowerment: Queering the Spiritualities of the *Mak Nyahs* of PT Foundation” argues that the interminable resistance and transgression of oppressive sexual and gender normativities form a migratory praxis of power shifts that generate empowerment. It is this empowerment that offers *mak nyahs* a wellspring for multiplex spiritualities. The objective of the exploration is to reveal and name the passion and alacrity with which *mak nyahs* not only perform their designated tasks but also live and flourish as human persons who take great pride in who they are.

Being and Believing: Asian Diaspora

In the seventh chapter, “Bring Your Own Pink Rice Cooker: Portability of the Queer API Experience,” Jonipher Kwong takes a critical look at his journey as a queer, ethnic Chinese immigrant to the United States from the Philippines, who found grounding in his upbringing and work in the Evangelical Christian church. His story is woven into the larger narrative of diasporic APIs and their struggle to hold in tension ethnic and religious heritages alongside sexuality and gender identity/expression. Drawing from his ministry in Hawai’i and political work against Proposition 8 in California, Kwong investigates the multiple engagement of queerness, religiosity, and ethnicity. From railroads to dry cleaners, from liquor stores to restaurants, APIs have adapted to new environments by first carefully navigating through a sea of racism to establish themselves as productive members of the community. Kwong questions the turbulent channel of

religious-based heterosexism that confronts queer subjects who seek to foster new lives in the “Promised Land.”

In his ethnography of a Filipino American *baklá*, Michael Sepidoza Campos explores the multitudinous ways that cultural manifestations of queerness destabilize—even dismantle—conceptions of “gay” in the United States. His essay, “Straddling California and Manila in the Bathhouse: A Queer Ethnography of a Filipino American Baklá Healthworker,” offers insight to the potency of diasporic identities to mimic and subvert the stability promised by assimilation. Campos deploys a postcolonial reading of the baklá’s diasporic and gendered negotiations, imagining a postcolonial ethnography to engage difference. The project experiments with method, addressing postcolonial suspicions of the representative dynamics at play in ethnographic research. Beyond its methodological exploration, the paper seeks to reflect on the ways an ethnographer and an interviewee create a “third space” to rethink friendship and learning as paths to being and becoming.

The anthology closes with Fabio Ribeira’s essay, “Sexy Cool Asians from Brazil: A Study of Second-Generation Japanese Brazilian Gay Men in Brazil.” The study focuses on the identity construction and the sexual lives of queer Japanese Brazilian descendants in Brazil. Through the study of the online community “Sexy Cool Orientals of Brazil” and face-to-face interviews, Ribeira observes the relationship of gender, race, and virtual reality, illuminating the strategies that these individuals deploy to live out queer identities in Brazilian society. Since queer individuals could be seen as having abject sexualities within the hegemonic matrix of intelligibility, they become unintelligible beings, rendering them a logical impossibility. As a virtual environment, the Internet offers these men the possibility of escape and re-creation. Queer bodies find the necessary conditions to be rematerialized and so be reconstituted and recognized anew in cyberspace. Virtual environments offer grounding, a fundamental space to foster sexual identity, and nurture queer lives offline.

The complex and variegated contributions in this book manifest a superabundant richness in contemporary scholarship on the topics of migration, race/ethnicity, and the construction of otherness. Yet, they do not claim a space of finality or conclusiveness. Rather, they contribute to the organicity of the topics, an organicity that is as unpredictable, evolutionary, and wondrous as life itself.

Notes

1. Reflecting on contemporary economic trends, Thomas Friedman (2009) describes as emerging *regionalism* among neighboring countries—where

national interests are replaced by webs of interdependent economies that benefit the collective.

2. The authors are quoting Harris (1964, 56).
3. Although not politically correct, this is the term used in Fanon's work.
4. Marx wrote this essay in 1851 and first published it in *Die Revolution* [*The Revolution*], a German-language monthly magazine, which was edited and published in New York by Joseph Weydemeyer.