

Opacity

Against this reductive transparency, a force of opacity is at work. No longer the opacity that enveloped and reactivated the mystery of filiation but another, considerate of all the threatened and delicious things joining one another (without conjoining, that is, without merging) in the expanse of Relation.

Édouard Glissant, Poetics of Relation

Opacity and the Closet

Here I am exploring the question of what [the closet](#) can do for [the closet](#). I borrow the term from Édouard Glissant and the framework of postcolonial theory and I want to see how it works within queerness. I understand opacity as a notion that foregrounds [visuality](#)¹ not only in the existence of the closet but also in slangs as products of the closet. Exploring this as a tactic of survival brings me to recognise other stances that work in similar ways, albeit relating to audio politics or spatiality / movement. Through this synthesis of lavender linguistics, queer theory, and postcolonial theory, I hope to open up those qualities of 'queer' that might still hold on to whiteness, Westernness, and the Global North, and by highlighting similarities in how precarity is dealt with, offer a more περιφερειακή reading of 'queer'.

The event of the closet with its ambiguity and potential for concealing (yet not constantly, not exactly, and doing so while allowing for a porous shielding) is immersed in opacity. The same quality is found surrounding the slangs analysed earlier. As already established the reasoning behind the creation of these linguistic registers is constant and common: the production of

learnt about a generous sense of belonging which includes those in need of inclusion despite the fact that they might (still) be acting in ways seemingly against the very premise that affords them this inclusion. Through further thinking with and in the slangs, I caught myself feeling

. This bubble soon began to trace itself as too white, and too central European. I was missing parts of my Balkanness, the harsh humour that is often medicinal, and this project helped me bring it back with the focus on ephemeral pleasures that one needs in order to keep going. Studying the slangs, and starting to use Kiliarnta again was an exercise in queerness, in being othered, reprimanded for one's tongue, expected to abide by a certain set of standards.

Tensions

'Isn't there also a tension between opacity/detour and queerness?' Renate asks me ... Is there? For me queerness is not so much about visibility (as gayness is/was) as it is about opacity. Opacity implies a veiling that allows for change and is therefore non-identitarian. Gayness and mainstream LGBT politics have been about visibility, and their causes (and effects) have been to an extent seemingly always oriented towards normativity. Their visibility was supposed to prove that we are all the same, that 'we are just like you'. Queerness is in line with opacity and detour and does not produce tension with them simply because it survives only through them. Opacity exists in a negation; not only of the 'we are just like you' dogma of homonormativity, but even more profoundly negates being seen, let alone compared and potentially deemed non-dangerous for the status quo.

I do not want to discard the importance of , and the steps the new civil rights movement has taken thanks to it. When Harvey Milk was calling for coming out to all those surrounding an LGBTQ+ person, he was of course imagining the significant impact that would instantaneously have on hetero/normative people realising the large percentage LGBTQ+ people make up and the proximity to them, something he hoped or assumed would have a direct impression on society at large and a shifting of mentalities and legislation.⁷ I maintain that visibility is not for everyone, and not for all

of oppression, of (mandatory) (unpaid) reproductive / affective labor, with socioeconomic connotations,⁶ and as a place where some are not asked to participate or be in, but are instead forced to do so, often with the support and sanction of legal systems. I am not dismissing accounts of the home as a site of oppression, as a space where authoritative dynamics might develop, or as a set of circumstances imposed on individuals without their consent (indeed I share them). Literature on 'crazy wives', 'homewreckers', and how to 'treat' them is plentiful. As are accounts of 'disobedient children'. Cvetkovich mentions Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* "[that] cast feminism as a cure for a domesticity whose problems manifested as bad feelings—housewives needed to leave the repressive confines of the home that was making them crazy."⁷

. Due to the ambivalence associated with the notion of home and the triggering qualities it contains for some, I have tried to think of it along different epistemological and cultural contexts. Calling it 'home' might be triggering for some, calling it «σπιτάκι»,⁸ might be lost on others. Perhaps borrowing from Woolf, and calling it 'a room of one's own'? Maybe that signifies a disconnect from others or a community. At the same time, they all entail elements that could be useful in this linguistic organising of the closet as a site for self-care and relating. I like the term «σπιτάκι» as a term used by children playing tag, because it acts as a haven. Once one crosses the line that marks «σπιτάκι» they are safe. Whatsmore, an extended hand of a person already inside acts as a surrogate for safety. Upon touching it, one is already safe, even if they haven't yet crossed the delineated space. The closet acted as such a haven for me for a while and, drawing from my personal experience with its affective potential, I find the connection to an extended helping hand particularly fitting in the context of community forming and care. It is a space one can be alone in, but it is also a space that can contain other affective Others, who may even reach out to connect and help.

Perhaps Derrida's take on Plato's Χώρα is another way to think of the closet; as a site, a space, a place, a locality, outside the city proper. Something that produces intellectual and, eventually, humourous outcomes.⁹ *Βρε χωρατατζού που είμαι ... Χώρα is foreign. Μια ξένη.* According to Derrida, Khôra appears to be neither this nor that, but at times both this and that. Khôra can be a mother or a nurse, a 'she' and an 'it', a polysemy of spatial, temporal, familial features, a third genus resisting the binary.¹⁰