

Burkhard Scherer and Matthew Ball (ed's), *Queering Paradigms II: Interrogating Agendas*, Peter Lang, Oxford, 2011; pp.355; RRP US \$75.95 paperback.

If queer theory has been criticised for being Euro- and America-centric, then *Queering Paradigms II* provides a departure from the norm. Arising from the 2010 conference of the same name, this collection engages with topical queer issues from every continent bar Antarctica, and is most striking perhaps in its collective lexicon. The abundance of neologisms testifies to the increasingly nuanced language being created worldwide to convey how queerness, and related matters of sex, sexuality, and gender, are infinitely more complex than such essentialising terms as 'gay' or 'lesbian' would allow. Accordingly, the collection can be fruitfully considered through pertinent examples of new terminology.

I have always disliked the term 'doing,' as in 'I did Europe last year'. The verb's sexual connotation suggests a kind of rape-and-pillage tourism, much as Vikings might have 'done' Europe in their time. Yet this sexual association is peculiarly fitting for a collection, which, by means of the verb *do*, effectively queers certain institutions conventionally considered stable, and reconceptualises them as fluid. This is evident in the idea of 'doing gender' in Sue/Sujay Kentlyn's chapter on *genderqueer* people: 'those who reject the "two-and-only-two" paradigm of gender in favour of an intensely personal and individualistic engagement with a more fluid, multiple and unstable figuring of gender identity' (p.153). Such a postmodern formulation destabilises fixed notions of gender through a refusal to identify strictly or consistently as either male or female. What Kentlyn's case study reveals, however, is how even in supposedly inclusive queer spaces, genderqueer or trans people can face unexpected discrimination: in a lesbian bar, a (biological woman) genderqueer who is 'read' as male may face hostility and even exclusion from others who subscribe to a strict binary gender system.

Jenny Kaighin's article 'Different Ways of "Doing Family" in Australia' attributes a similar dynamism to the idea of family. In outlining the history of lesbian parenting in the face of the law, Kaighin ponders some important questions, such as why lesbian couples are often perceived to be suitable and 'safe' as parents while gay men are not, and further, 'whether being seen as safe is in fact colluding with heteronormative notions of family, rather than challenging or disrupting the primacy of the traditional nuclear family as the preferred family norm' (p.259). For Kaighin, same-sex families should act as a site of transformation; a way to 'do family differently' (p.259), rather than becoming subsumed as a variation on the conventional family model, resulting in the parents' gender becoming invisibilised.

As the case of genderqueer illustrates, new terms perform the important work of making visible previously unrecognised issues. Andrew McLean's chapter centres on *transmisogyny*, or the discrimination, ridicule, and transphobia faced by trans women from gay men. McLean offers several possible reasons for this phenomenon, while debating whether it is 'merely a case of "resentful rejection," . . . or part of a larger paradigm of patriarchal oppression' (p.91). At other times a reconceptualisation of existing terms may offer a solution. Both Bethany Coston's and Matthew Ball's contributions examine 'intimate partner violence' (IPV), as opposed to the more commonly used 'domestic violence' with its connotations of occurring only towards women, in (straight) nuclear-family households. Coston is critical of the fact that the most common explanations for same-sex IPV are based on a heterorelational model, and suggests that, in order to arrive at more accurate explanations, one must queer prevailing ideas of what constitutes both a relationship and

violence. Matthew Ball alerts us to the reality that in same-sex relationships IPV is underreported, noting especially that gay men often cannot recognise themselves as victims, as current discourses offer no way to make such a position intelligible. Terms like ‘domestic violence’ simply do not apply to same-sex relationships, and both contributions highlight the need for a new vocabulary.

Similarly, the use of ‘intragender’ as opposed to ‘same-sex,’ is suited to Kathleen O’Mara’s sensitive account of the unspoken nature of such relationships within the homophobic climate of present-day Ghana. O’Mara reminds us that ‘gender’ is a western, colonial notion, foreign to West Africans themselves, and ‘does not reflect the variety and complexity of African same-sex intimacies’ (p.135). In Ghanaian culture, the preference for discreet and indirect expression regarding matters of sexuality is present in the protective tactic of silence, whereas the western strategy of coming out is culturally unintelligible, as ‘contemporary Ghanaian networks . . . quietly build community rather than demand social equality or human rights’ (p.137).

Same-sex relationships are also linked with the domestic in Hongwei Bao’s fascinating description of the increasing vocabulary denoting homosexual identities in China. Bao explains how in the late 1990s, influenced by global LGBT culture, the term *kù’ér* (‘queer’) appeared, alongside *tóngzhì* (literally ‘comrade’) – introduced as a way to “indigenize Chinese queer politics” (p.117). According to Bao, such Chinese differ from their western counterparts for, instead of ‘coming out,’ *tóngzhì* ‘characteristically adopt a “coming home” strategy; that is, bringing same-sex partners home and making their parents accept them as family members’ (p.119).

For queer guru Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, ‘queer’ is inherently dynamic: it is ‘a continuing moment, movement, motive—recurrent, eddying, *troublant*,’ with the word itself meaning ‘across’ (*Tendencies*, 1994, p.xii). This is precisely what comes across in *Queering Paradigms II*. All eighteen chapters are accessibly written, and the collection opens up a multitude of directions for further research. Further, if queer theory has been criticised for being too academic, the book’s introduction reminds us that ‘queering’ is not only about deconstructing and challenging normativity *on paper* (the titular ‘queering paradigms’), but also ‘concerned with something deeper, with the aim of achieving tangible results’ (thus ‘interrogating agendas’) (p.1). Clearly, then, this collection is not only saying, but *doing* language, in order to give queers around the globe voices of their own.

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