

Re-Thinking Power, Subjects,
and Feminist and Queer Alliances

CO-MOTION

Paola
Bacchetta

Co-Motion



CO-MOTION

Re-Thinking Power, Subjects,
and Feminist and Queer Alliances

Paola Bacchetta

D **U** **K** **E**
Duke University Press
Durham and London

2 0 2 6

UNIVERSITY
PRESS

© 2026 DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞

Project Editor: Ihsan Taylor

Designed by A. Mattson Gallagher

Typeset in Arno Pro

by Westchester Publishing Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Bacchetta, P. (Paola), author.

Title: Co-motion : re-thinking power, subjects, and feminist and queer alliances / Paola Bacchetta.

Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2026. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2025021629 (print)

LCCN 2025021630 (ebook)

ISBN 9781478032977 (paperback)

ISBN 9781478029533 (hardcover)

ISBN 9781478061724 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Social movements—History. | Decolonization. | Feminist theory. | Critical theory.

Classification: LCC HM881 .B34 2026 (print) | LCC HM881 (ebook) | DDC 303.48/409—dc23/eng/20250617

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2025021629>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2025021630>

Cover art: Bharati Chaudhuri, *Cosmic Vibe*, 1994. Oil on canvas.

Photo © Superstock / Bridgeman Images.

DUKE

UNIVERSITY
PRESS

Contents

Acknowledgments vii

Introduction 1

Openings

- 1 Co-Motion at Present 33
- 2 Imaginings Otherwise 70
- 3 Co-Formations, Co-Productions 103
- 4 Situated Planetarities 139
- 5 Other Sensings in Praxes 175

Appendix A 217

"Our Queer Pride Is Anti-Racist"

Appendix B 219

Pride for Whom? Pride for What?

The Opportunism of Alliances and Visibility

Appendix C 223

Racialized Queers and Trans

Against Homonationalism

Notes 225

References 231

Index 265

DUKE

UNIVERSITY
PRESS

Acknowledgments

This book is the fruit of conversations, coexperiences, common projects, and *co-motion* with so many people, groups, and other *beings-becomings* that I fear they cannot all be named. So, I apologize in advance if I fail to account for everyone here.

First, I want to thank the Chochenyo-speaking Ohlone people, your ancestors and future generations. I wrote the bulk of this book on your unceded land, Huichin in Turtle Island, or the place colonizers renamed Berkeley, California, USA. I am grateful to the Tupi-Guarani and Tupinambá people, your ancestors, and progeniture for the use of Meimbi and the Tupi-Guarani ancestral lands that the colonizers called Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, and Salvador, Bahia, in the territory they designated as Brazil. In Florianópolis I owe a special debt of gratitude to Miriam Grossi and Carmen Rial. In Salvador I want to thank Felipe Fernandes, Angela Figueredo, Catarina Rea, Ana Catarina Benefice Barbosa, and Barbara Alves. I also thank the Pataxó people, from the ancestral lands the colonizers called Porto Seguro, for your immense generosity and what you taught me.

I thank my colleagues in the Department of Gender and Women's Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, for providing during these recent years a vibrant, supportive, and intellectually exciting environment for research, writing, teaching, and living: Mel Chen, Patrice D. Douglass, Ianna Hawkins Owen, Minoo Moallem, Courtney Morris, Laura C. Nelson, Leslie Salinger, Dora Santana, Elora Shehabuddin, Eric Stanley, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Barbara Barnes, and Brooke Lober. Thank you to our brilliant administrative staff: Althea Grannum-Cummings, Gillian Edgelow, and Sandra Richmond.

Many thanks to my friends, sisters, siblings, comrades in my earliest meaningful *co-motion* oriented group Dyketactics!, and in the Dyketactics! community: Chea Villanueva, Sherrie Cohen, Barbara Ruth, the late Ceil Bell, Kathy Hogan, Julie Blackwomon, the late Monica Hand, Morgan

Norwood, Sharon Owens, Anita Lam, Arleen Olshan, Anita Cornwell, Laurie Flint, Pauline Miriam, the late Rosalie Davis, Tommi Avicoli Mecca, and T. D. The politics we developed, our care for each other, our ongoing conversations, together leave their trace in my life and work. I remain after all these years fully indebted to Monique Dental of the group Ruptures in Paris, for your personal-political solidarity during my exile that literally changed the conditions of my life.

I thank everyone in the following collective projects: Casa delle donne (Via del Governo Vecchio 39, Rome, Italy); Rifiutare (Rome, Italy); La Maison des Femmes (8 Cité Prost, Paris, France); Archives Recherches Cultures Lesbiennes (Paris, France); Collectif féministe contre le racisme et l'anti-sémitisme (Paris, France); Mouvement contre le racisme (Paris France); the Delhi Group (New Delhi, India); Red Rose Group (New Delhi, India); and Decolonizing Sexualities Network (DSN).

My work on this book was nourished immensely by collective work with friends and colleagues in and with the Decolonizing Sexualities Network, of which I am current codirector. I thank: Sandeep Bakshi, Suhraiya Jivraj, Silvia Posocco, Jin Haritaworn, Fatima El Tayeb, Gee Semmalar, Malek Cheikh, Richard Mar, Sabreen Al Rassace, Tariq Lakhriissi, Walaa Alqaisiya, Haneen Maikey, Huma Dar, Joao Gabriell, Michaëla Danjé, Aruni Kashyap, Alexandre Erre, Ochy Curiel Picardo, Marco Chivalan-Carrillo, Akhil Kang, Dhiren Borisa, Elizabeth Lowe-Hunter, Omi Salas-SantaCruz, Nof Nasser-Edin, Nour Abu-Assab, Santa Khurai, P. J. DiPietro, Roderick Ferguson, Raju Rage, Tala Khanmalek, Living Smile Vidya, Latifa Akay, Tamsila Tauqir, Ghazala Anwar, Mikail Khan, Rima Athar, Daayiee Abdullah, YaSaeen Rahman, Türkan Yildiz, Malissa, Estelle Prudent, Serena Dankwa, Inés Ixierda, Evren Savci, Dawud Bumayé, Judith Gloria Purpre, Kami Xica, Yoann Idiri, Massinissa Garaoun.

For our meaningful conversations, in some cases very extensive over time and in others quite brief, yet that all leave their mark in these pages, I am indebted to: Norma Alarcón, Nawo Crawford, Rabab Abdulhadi, Jalil Bennani, Jules Falquet, Sirma Bilgé, Fuifuilupe Niumeitolu, Nasima Moujoud, Sonia Dayan-Herzbrun, Soraya Tlatli, Louiza Belhamici, Irene Capitelli, the late Lauren Berlant, Donatella D'Angelo, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, France Winddance Twine, Bishnupriya Ghosh, Roshanak Kheshti, Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, Omi Salas-SantaCruz, Carla M. Trujillo, David Theo Goldberg, Huma Dar, Pratibha Parmar, Shaheen Haq, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Siké Billé, Sam Bourcier, Leila Ahmed, Sharad Chari, Natalia Brizuela, Marlon Bailey, Che Gossett, Jean Beaman, Leti Volpe, Tinku Ali,

Inderpal Grewal, Lucia Guardì, Maria Lugones, Stefania Pandolfo, Lawrence Rosenthal, Yala Nadia Kisukidi, Elaine Kim, Natalee Kēhaulani, Akila Kizzi, Leece Lee, Gina Dent, Angela Davis, Iman Farag, Laura Fantone, Annie Isabel Fukushima, Veena Das, Soumaya Mestiri, Ritu Menon, Deepak Mehta, Nadine Nabor, the late Dalila Kadri, Angelique Abboud, Susana de Castro, Matt Richardson, Tianna Paschel, Malkia Devich Cyril, Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez, Zahra Ali, Salima Amari, Patricia Hill Collins, Sigrid Vertommen, Soraya El Kahlaoui, Priya Kandaswamy, Sandhya Luther, Meeta Rani Jha, Tiffany Jean Willoughby-Herard, Leti Volpe, Skye Ward, Maria Benedito-Basto, Lawrence Cohen, the late Siddhartha Gautam Gupta, Julie Gorecki, Tanushree Gangopadhyay, Geeta Shah, Amina Mama, Fatima Ait Ben Lmamdani, Wanda Alarcón, Alisa Bierria, Cindi Cruz, Kader Attia, Karl Britto, Sheba Chhachhi, Hatem Bazian, Ingrid Steinmeister, Fatou Sow, Souad Benani, Kathleen Dameron, Caleb Dawson, Diana Eck, Vinicius Kauê Ferreira, Kerby Lynch, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak, Rina Nissim, Norma Cantú, Heidi Nast, Alana Lentin, Shireen Hassim, Hanane Karimi, Janet Jacobsen, Bob Lederer, Nikki Jones, Camilla Hawthorne, Patricia Penn Hilden, Thamy Ayouch, Marlon Biley, Lauren Berlant, Dorothy Austin, Randy P. Connor, Houria Bouteldja, Seloua Luste Boulbina, Paul Amar, Maylei Blackwell, Angelika Sifaki, Lucha Corpi, Gaia Maqui Giuliani, Cathy Hannabach, U Aldridge Hansberry, David Hatfield Sparks, Corinna Gould, Caren Kaplan, Anne McClintock, Mame-Fatou Niang, Ewa Alicja Majewska, Nivedita Menon, Geeta Patel, Raka Ray, David Palumbo-Liu, Ochy Curiel Pichardo, Lissell Quiroz, Shailja Patel, Azadeh Kian, AnaLouise Keating, Noémi Michel, Sunaina Maira, Gabriel Rockhill, Jasbir Puar, Gerard Koskovitch, Keo Echeveria, Lisa Dettmer, Alana Lentin, Chia Longman, Azeezah Kanji, Gauri Chowdhary, Anjali Arondekar, Béatriz Rettig, Frances Hasso, Muriel Grenet, Sonia Jabbar, the late Kumari Jayawardena, Bev Ditsie, Ashwini Sukthankar, Ashwini Tambe, Ghiwa Sayegh, Francie Foster, Jayati Lal, Gohar Shanazaryan, Abha Bhaiya, Gayatri Gopinath, Paola Zaccharia, Amina Wadud, Cristina Scheibe Wolf, Paula Barreto Silva, Evelyn Blackwood, Angela Harris, Kathryn Moeller, Nadia Seti, Steven Small, the late Kamla Bhasin, Ben Papadopoulos, Piro Rexhepi, Tanya Golash-Boza, Anna M. Agathangelou, SA Smythe, the late Salim Kidwai, Inès de Luna, Tamar Shirinian, Kanchana Natarajan, Laura Perez, Debarati Sanyal, Jennifer Terry, Maira Kubik Mano, Moon Charania, Fania Noël, Teresa Sacchet, Saida Barkat, Ramon Grossfoguel, Paolo Guerra, Sangita Shroff, Jyoti Puri, Lisbet Tellefsen, Tamar Shirinian, Melissa Thackaway,

Jovita Xixikinha, Laura Wexler, Elena Vasilou, Chela Zimmouri, Caleb Luna, the late Lenn Keller, Margaret Power, Jeanne Scheper, Fouzieyha Towghi, Kath Weston, Howard Winant, Tobaron Waxman, Cha Prieur, Vrushali Patel, Govan Scott Lewis, Jose David Saldivar, Tanika Sarkar, Lok Siu, Zakia Salime, Adrienne Torf, Keo Echeveria, Vitória Silveira, Katharine Trajano, Denize Ribeiro, Adi Morosophe, Pat Purt, Susan Stryker, Dina Siddiqi.

I am grateful to you, my dear nieces and nephews, for being in my life. You are my teachers from whom I continue to learn: Gianna, Chelsa, Nigel, Urias, Tyla, Tavares, Amos, Autumn, Elijah, Ethan, Lily, Steph, and Laila.

Again, many thanks to Angela Figueiredo for everything.

At Duke University Press I am indebted to Ken Wissoker, who from the beginning to the end kindly shepherded this book. I also thank Ryan Kendall, Ihsan Taylor, and Jade Brooks for their extensive help. Thank you to the very many anonymous reviewers at Duke University Press whose comments enhanced the book. Thank you to Ideas on Fire. I am grateful to my generous colleagues and friends who offered to read the entire manuscript and whose thoughtful comments kept me on my toes: Norma Alarcón, Lisa Rofel, Angana Chatterji, Richard Shapiro, and Abdul Janmohammad.

For financial support at various stages I thank: the Fulbright Program; the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; the University of California Humanities Research Institute; the Al-Falah Program of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of California, Berkeley; the Office of Research at the University of California, Berkeley; Bear Funds at the University of California, Berkeley; the Vice Chancellor for Research Book Subvention; and the France-Berkeley Fund. Many thanks to the *École des hautes études en sciences sociales* for financing a residency period in Paris. Thank you to the Ministry of Education, Government of Brazil, for a travel grant. For opportunities for exchanges with colleagues, I am grateful to the Center for Race and Gender, and the Townsend Center, both at the University of California, Berkeley; the University of California Humanities Research Institute; and the University of California Center for New Racial Studies. I thank the French Consulate of San Francisco for funding for the international conference on Gender in Multiplicities: Intersectionality, Decoloniality, Assemblages, Co-Formations that I organized at University of California, Berkeley. I am particularly grateful to the French Consulate's cultural attaché, Stéphane Ré.

I also want to thank the cats whose person I am—Maya, Aimée, JazzCat—along with the neighborhood cats who are regulars for breakfast

at home—Mr. Boots and Ollie—for insisting that I take breaks from my research and writing to fulfill your many demands: for affection, food, playtime, to break up fights, or to clean up your various messes. Thank you to the free flying birds in the neighborhood, most especially Tara and Tara Ki Saheli of the springtime, for providing beautiful chirpy soundtracks during your stays on our terrace and for continually reminding me how all *beings-becomings* on the planet are centrally important to my life.

DUKE

UNIVERSITY
PRESS

Acknowledgments

INTRODUCTION

Openings

I dream of what it would be to take a collective breath,
to reimagine how we might stop reacting and lean into a
paradigm of our own creation . . .

Assata Shakur

We are in an epoch of simultaneity.

Michel Foucault, *Des espaces autres*

Wherever you are is the entry point.

Kabir

This book speaks to an urgency of our times: the need to come together across the planet massively, to transform relations of power, to preserve and to invent new modes of collective *freedom-life*. It is an invitation to academics, activists, and artists to rethink where we are, how relations of power operate at present, how to dismantle them, and how to imagine and cocreate elsewheres together. The book aims to induce a pause in time so that—as Assata Shakur, Michel Foucault, and Kabir suggest above—we can “take a collective breath,” find other “entry points” for resistance, and construct “a paradigm of our own creation.”

Unfortunately, earlier and present dominant critical theoretical tools in the United States, Western Europe, and sectors in the Global South(s) that reproduce and contribute to them are not fully suitable for such tasks. They have many limitations. Power is constantly reconfiguring its means and manifestations, but the current, most evident theorizations do not necessarily always grasp how power is operating at the moment.

Historically and today dominant critical theorizations from the Global North(s) remain largely unconcerned with coloniality and further are often *colonialism-and-race-amnesic*. Some confuse questions

D

UNIVERSITY
PRESS

of decolonization with social justice or civil rights (Tuck and Yang 2012). Many trap us in a binary of *subject-centric* vs. totally subjectless approaches to power. This is the case of a whole range of dominant Global Northern feminist and queer theory, for example. Some dominant critical theorizations confine us to reductive, homogenized, fixed definitions of “the” dominant or “the” subaltern subject, or of “the” Global North and “the” Global South, thereby conveniently erasing an entire range of often deadly relations of power inside and in relation to each ensemble. Unfortunately, dominant critical theorizations cannot clarify our thinking about how alliances fail or thrive.

Below dominant critical theory whole registers of subaltern critical theory in the Global North(s) remain underground, unheard, or inaccurately heard by inattentive, dominant-thinking critical subjects (Sithole 2020). Some of this theory is actually imperceptible in dominant fields of intelligibility. In a parallel mode to dominant critical theory, much of what is currently recognized as subaltern critical theory, too, flows transnationally, unidirectionally from the Global North(s) across the planet. In many sites across the Global South(s) there are university courses and dissertations on subaltern critical theory from the Global North(s) while the subaltern theoretical production in the same Global Southern countries remains marginalized or erased. The theory that streams in this one-way traffic is often used in productive ways, especially when modified, adapted, and transformed *in-context*. Yet we might ask: What are such theories blocking and how?¹ The one-way flow, the enrooting of the categories, logics, pre-suppositions, and conclusions that it carries, even as they are constructively reimagined *in-context*, can simultaneously lead to inadvertent suppression or obstruction of other possibilities in the site of their arrival. In that sense, albeit with great caution, we can speak of a kind of Global Northern subaltern *epistemic imperialism* that is an effect not of the imperial agency of subaltern theorizing subjects or even of the theory itself, but rather of the flows and blockages produced by transnational relations of power.

This book attempts to open up how we think about relations of power, subjects, and potentialities for alliances across the planet. It tries to suggest new languages as open spaces that can help us to imagine multiple differential sites at once, including in ways that will be incomprehensible outside their context. To do so, the book respectfully engages with both loud and silenced present theorizations even as it labors to reorient us elsewhere. Unfortunately, the work in this book is imperfect, flawed, and sometimes even problematic. It is at every turn capable of inadvertently reproducing

everything it opposes and of blocking everything it loves. But we must risk these challenges and more if we are to ever move ourselves into a useful space of possibility. To do so, ultimately, the book proposes some different kinds of critical *theory-assemblages* to think and feel with.

We can think of *theory-assemblages* as ensembles, clusters, or constellations of approaches, theorizations, concepts, logics, sensings, ways of knowing, kinds of knowledge productions, and knowledges. We need new kinds of *theory-assemblages* to open our thought processes, our perception, and modes of meaning making, to comprehend and change our worlds. The *theory-assemblages* I suggest in this book intend to be obsessively attentive to the immediate contexts, lives, perspectives, theorizations, sensings, practices, priorities, and *freedom-exigencies* of the very most extreme subaltern subjects and *beings-becomings* across the planet. Again, this is an impossible task but a necessary aspiration.

I draw the notion of assemblages in *theory-assemblages* from both the English translation of the French term *agencement* and the English definition of the term *assemblages*. In French popular culture and for Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *agencement* carries the connotation of an action, a doing, or *operability* (Rey and Rey-Debove 1984; Deleuze and Guattari 1980; see below and chapters 3 and 4). Accordingly, the *theory-assemblages* that this book proposes are meant to be dynamic, pliable, reworkable, *in-movement*. They specifically do not constitute a map or program for liberation. They have no set content, boundaries, or plans. They are not meant to be universal or even universalizable. They have no pretention to “applicability” everywhere. For, we are not in the realm of a computer program. Nor are we in sync with colonial progress narratives that unhelpfully presume a “one theory suits all” position with the Global North(s) invariably, oppressively, as the ultimate “freedom” model. Some approaches, concepts, logics, sensings, ways of knowing within these pages will—perhaps fortunately—be absolutely unworkable in some contexts. Others, I hope, will be useful to *freedom-exigent* desires, practices, and movements when reimaged, rerooted, recalibrated, perhaps totally resignified and differently operationalized, or oppositionally frontally rejected in the specifics of given contexts. The concepts, approaches, and orientations in this book are meant as infinitesimal possible points of departure, not arrival.

I understand the notion of theory in *theory-assemblages* as akin to poetry. Such *theory-as-poetry* can be beautiful and loving beyond the words in which it is conveyed. It can disrupt and overcome epistemic barriers. It can unsuppress thought and affect. It can give us other ways of sensing,

knowing, critiquing, and constructing. It can produce affect that we cannot yet explain. It can usher in new floods of meaningfulness. It can transport us into other worlds. It can create new times and spaces. It can completely transform our lives. Without *theory-as-poetry* to bring us emotionally, psychically, mentally elsewhere, we risk eternally reproducing the same. *Theories-as-poetry* enact as subjects-agents to move and reorient us elsewhere within, without.

Co-Motion

A pivotal notion in the *theory-assemblages* here is *co-motion*. It is a key term in the book's title, its *raison d'être* and its main arc. I propose *co-motion* as a large umbrella to include myriad disparate ways that people and social movements come together. *Co-motion* is about unity (*co*) and action (*motion*) together. It also suggests convergent collective affect (*emotion*). Some various kinds of *co-motion* formations are alliances, coalitions, networks, concerted action, unions, associations, unifications, mergings, assemblages, collaborations, solidarities, leagues, collectivities, bonds, convergences, groupings, assemblies, and links. I elaborate the concept of *co-motion* in chapter 2. Here, I want to highlight that for *co-motion* the different terms for coming together are not just semantic. Instead, they entail distinct kinds of subjects, social glue, and projects. *Co-motion* is a large rubric that enables us to discuss them all together.

In these pages I primarily address power and *co-motion*—instead of political or social movement programs—because there are potentially infinite possibilities for getting us to a desirable place for concerted *freedom-exigent transformation* once we more fully understand where we are, in what relations of power we are entrapped, how we are interrelated, and how to move together toward *freedom-life*. Foucault (1981) cautions: “The idea of a program of proposals is dangerous. As soon as a program is presented, it becomes the law, and there’s a prohibition against inventing. There ought to be an inventiveness special to a situation like ours.” The Invisible Committee (2009, 19) reminds us: “If one knows how to move, the absence of a schema is not an obstacle but a source of opportunity.” Thus, this book is an incitement to pause for a moment to radically rethink power and to create *freedom-exigent* solidarities. It hopes to incite a direct assault on the colonial-capitalist-imperialist-racial-gendered-speciesist tactic of divide and rule as we know it today across its many manifestations across the planet.

This book arrives in a period of stunning, confusing paradoxes. Our times are murderous, characterized by the expansion of violent practices of elimination. As I am completing this introduction, Donald Trump has been reelected to the presidency in the United States. This event is part of a broader, rapid rise in extreme right-wing forces, including fascist forces, transnationally. Right-wing leaders, groups, and movements inspire each other and work together. They sometimes share finances, discourses, spaces, strategies, and tactics. Some right wings are brought into state power via “democratic” national elections, as in the United States, India, Brazil, Italy, Turkey, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Japan, Russia, Burma, and Israel. Others are organized into growing oppositional political parties, as in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, and Holland (Bugnon 2022; Durham and Power 2010). Wherever they can, they facilitate, accelerate, or regenerate lethal conditions, whether via proactive enactments, calculated inaction to let die, or apathetic inertia.

Besides the usual recruits, today’s right wings are increasingly attracting some queer and trans people and integrating them at high levels. They seduce queer and trans subjects from dominant social sectors by appealing to racialized, ethnic, or religious group privilege and assigning exceptional queerphobia and transphobia to subalternly racialized, ethnicized, or religious Others (Dutta 2023; Bakshi 2022; Bacchetta 2019c, 2004, 1996, 1994; Bacchetta and Power 2002; Sarkar and Butalia 1996). In 2017, a survey by *Institut d’études politiques* (Institute for Political Studies) in France revealed that 38.5 percent of white French gay men voted for the fascist National Front. One white gay man, Florian Phillipot, rose to the party’s highest ranks; two others became mayors: Fabien Engelman and Steve Briois. Milo Yiannopoulos, who is white, British, and gay and infamously calls Trump “Daddy,” spent years on US campuses loudly inciting passions against trans people, undocumented people, feminism, affirmative action, and the left. In India, the Hindu extreme right is recruiting some Hindu trans subjects and pitting them against Muslim trans subjects (Dutta 2023; Bakshi 2022). At the same time queer and trans people in these and many other sites are engaged in mutual survival, in oppositional and non-oppositional resistance, and in the creation of spaces of freedom no matter how precarious (see, for example, chapter 5).

I also write at a time when the Israeli state, enabled by the military and financial backing of the US Government, is committing a highly spectacularized, outright genocide in Gaza. Since October 2023, transnational media

has been flooded with images of Palestinian bodies of women, children, and men in rubble; bodies wrapped in plastic bags; bodies mutilated and maimed; ruins of entire neighborhoods, homes, hospitals, camps, infrastructure, educational institutions, everything, flattened by Israeli bombing. The enormity and vastness of devastation and suffering in Gaza, along with other ongoing invisibilized genocides (Rohingya, Uyghurs, populations in Sudan, etc.), make this specific moment of the world absolutely horrifying. At the same time, this unspeakable violence is being met with ongoing Palestinian resistance and with extensive solidarity movements across the globe in which anticolonial, anti-imperialist feminists, queers, and trans people are among others playing a crucial role despite intense repression.

The book also comes on the cusp of a period when the world's many preexisting inequities and brutalities of power were aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. It had ushered in a murderous triple exposure. First, COVID-19 put into relief the life and death quality of human-to-human interrelationality and of our inseparability from other *beings-becomings* on the planet. Our survival depends on each other. Second, COVID-19 both spectacularized and invisibilized power. The viciousness of colonialism, the forms of racial capitalism that continue colonial logics and practices and that naturalize ongoing imperialist enactments—whether as oppression, repression, exploitation, occupation, dispossession, extraction, appropriation, subjugation, subjectivation, epistemic violence, spiritual obliteration, psychic suffering, incarceration, inequity, or annihilation—are ever more apparent. Across the Global North(s) and South(s), maps of places without access to adequate living conditions, vaccinations and medical care, maps of war and fast or slow military destruction, and maps of extraction and toxification correspond directly to sites of higher rates of infection, illness, and death. While workers are losing jobs, corporate profits are soaring.

At the same time, many merciless inequities remain concealed and the people most subjected to them disregarded. They constitute what earlier HIV activists called the viral underclass, defined not as those infected with a virus (HIV, COVID-19, or other) but rather as those who are “needlessly” exposed to conditions that “shape their lives” such that they are infinitely more susceptible to viral infection (Thrasher 2020). They are subjected to planned deprivations, exclusions, forms of violence, and everything else that leads—as Ruth Wilson Gilmore’s (2007) work sustains—to premature death. Third, the pandemic revealed how, for the very most subaltern subjects anywhere, some forms of *co-motion*—such as solidarities, collaborations, bonds, unity—have long been in place as a necessity without

which bare survival is foreclosed. This book directly addresses the power that creates and sustains these brutal conditions, as well as modes of coming together to transform them.

Indeed, simultaneously, many kinds of *freedom-exigent* activisms, activisms, and movements are expanding. They are creating new subjectivities and forms of *co-motion*. Besides the above mentioned examples. In recent years global mass media has amply covered autonomous feminist movements that are flourishing and transnationally converging against sexual violence—whether self-designated as MeToo, *Ni Una Menos* (Not One [Woman] Less), or other. In 2020 Black Lives Matter (BLM) swelled from its US base to become unstoppable across Western Europe and Abya Yala, both places with an infinitely longer history of antiracism theorizations and movements.² In 2019, activists in several countries organized massive protest against social and economic injustice, often inspiring each other: in Algeria, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Germany, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Spain, Sudan, the UK, and Zimbabwe. In 2014, solidarity against that year's earlier Israeli massacre in Gaza became visibly planetary. Shortly before all of that, in 2011 spectacular, vast uprisings for dignity and social justice arose globally: Tunisia's "Arab Spring," the *Indignados* (Outraged) in Spain, and Occupy revolts in Africa, Asia, Europe, the United States, and elsewhere. While feminists, queers, and trans activists have long been participants and leaders in broader peoples' movements, in many places they now specifically bring analyses of gender and sexuality to the center.

Today, as dominant media highlight larger scale revolts, many less noticed *freedom-exigent* movements are also unfolding. Since a recent gathering in Chiapas, Mexico, in 2018, Indigenous feminists across Abya Yala, Turtle Island, Aotearoa, the Pacific, and elsewhere have been assembling regularly in global transtribal meetings.³ In Western Europe, separate movements against Islamophobia, Romaphobia, and anti-Black racism are now uniting. Global Northern queers of color, Global Southern queers, and allies now work together in networks: against colonialism; coloniality; racism including casteism; capitalism; the multiple kinds of sexist and queer-phobic social structures, systems, configurations, and assemblages that I refer to under the rubric of *misogynarchies*; and speciesism (see chapter 4; Bacchetta 2025c, 2017; Bakshi et al. 2016).⁴ Present country-specific activisms and moves to link across borders are the fruitful culmination of years of prior revolts, insurgencies, critical art, poetry, music, literature, daily

practices of living together otherwise, and transnational solidarities from which we can learn immensely (see chapter 5).

Unfortunately, historically and today, often when we seem to be in revolution, in revolt, or at least in a critical period of hope, the tables quickly turn. In an early example, after the radical 1968 movements in the United States, Richard Nixon came to power. Several recent revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East were followed by dictatorships. In France, after BLM uprisings, the government outlawed autonomous groups of people of color (see chapter 5). Brazil's evolution with social justice was brutally interrupted when in 2016 the right-wing Bolsonaro government took power. Though the extreme right was (barely) defeated in Brazil's 2022 elections, as in the United States' 2020 elections, deep political divides, social damage, the naturalization of right-wing discourses and practices for a broader part of the population, remain. The Trump campaign capitalized on this situation as one among other factors in the 2024 US elections. At present we lack adequate ways of analyzing why such simultaneous openings and closures happen and how to prevent this.

In this contradictory, unsettling planetary context, in the face of the present acceleration of harm, our stakes for understanding power and its operations across scales, and for creating effective *freedom-exigent co-motion* together, could not be higher. This book hopes to make an epistemic and praxis-oriented intervention into these conditions as it proposes *theory-assemblages* precisely for those aims. In doing so, the book is expansive but also has limitations. It does not claim to account for every kind of power, subject, or form of organizing everywhere. That would be impossible and not necessarily fruitful. Instead, this book is primarily concerned with the inseparability of multiplicities of relations of power—colonialism, coloniality, capitalism, imperialism, racism, *misogynarchies*, speciesism—and with *co-motion* that speaks to the conditions and *freedom-exigencies* of extremely subaltern subjects and *beings-becomings*. The book is also limited in space. It addresses mainly four countries: France, Italy, India, and the United States. It refuses to reduce them to passive terrains on which analysis can be imposed. Instead, it engages their theorizations and practices. Each site has different kinds of epistemic, methodological, and empirical contributions and implications (Pandey 1992, 28; Balasurya 1984; Spivak 2003). And, since each is connected to other places by relations of power, many additional locations enter and exit these pages.

Lines of Flight

Four interrelated lines of flight—or axes that try to escape confines, soar, and open up yet other theoretical, affective, praxis-oriented spaces as they move—traverse this book. They are: *freedom-exigent transformation*; power; the constellation *subalternative sensing, perception, and intelligibility*; and methodological *operability*.

Freedom-Exigent Transformation

A first moving streak here—that hopefully unseals other apertures ad infinitum—is *freedom-exigent transformation*. It is about creating conditions to become radically free together. The notion of *freedom* in *freedom-exigent* requires the end of colonialism, capitalism, imperialism, racism, all formations of sexism, queerphobias, transphobias, speciesisms, and kinds of rampant destruction of the planet, however they may manifest. *Exigent* in *freedom-exigent* reminds us that freedom is an emergency, a pressing need, a requirement, yet an always unfinished project. We are never already there. It is a continual striving, or what Angela Davis theorizes as “a constant struggle” “without closure” (Davis 2013). To invoke *transformation* with *freedom-exigent* is to make clear that the present order must go. It means a massive uprooting, demolition, and transformation of power. It entails the end of oppression, repression, exploitation, occupation, dispossession, extraction, appropriation, subjugation, subjectivation, epistemic violence, spiritual obliteration, psychic suffering, incarceration, inequity, annihilation. We will need to *sense, perceive*, newly imagine, hallucinate, dream, and envision differently together. It is about alternatively calibrating, assembling, organizing, materializing life for thrive-able relationalities to each other and the planet.

Yet, who and what can constitute *freedom-exigent transformative* forces or not? Not all subjects implicated in *freedom-exigent transformation*, who will change, can so easily become actors of transformation. In these pages it will become clear that the subject-agent of *freedom-exigent co-motion* is vastly beyond the neoliberal, individual, bounded I-subject (see chapter 2). If total *freedom-life* implicates all of life—including its forms that are dominantly not considered to be life at all—then we are in the realm of completely other epistemes, with different sets of categories, logics, presuppositions, and conclusions. The subject of transformation will need to understand some part of oneself in a radically different relationality to other forms of life and to the planet (TallBear 2017; Anzaldúa [1987] 2007).

We will see later that the subjects and *beings-becomings* who/that will be actors of transformation will have to be expansive enough to include sentient life such as a cat, goat, insect, and fish; nonsentient life such as land, minerals, sea, stars, the sun, and air; and entities and subjective states such as ghosts, presences, ancestors, and future descendants. Each is, together we are, all of that. *Freedom-exigent transformation* is about and for all subjects and *beings-becomings* and the planet. It includes freedom for all our dead and as-yet-unborn.

How all this can unfold is a vast area filled with questions. We already know something—far from everything—about what kinds of environments, social formations, mechanisms, and practices must dissolve, be gone. They encompass what Achille Mbembe calls “deathworlds,” or the brutal living conditions created by necropolitics that transform people into “living dead” (2019). They include what Orlando Patterson calls conditions of “social death,” or the murderous situations of subjects who are not considered fully human (1982). They encompass what Rob Nixon terms “slow violence,” or the environmental conditions that, via “incremental and accretive” violence, have harmful-to-lethal effects (2013). They entail what Abdul R. JanMohamed frames as “death-boundedness,” or preexisting social orders and settings for eventual death for Black people and other subaltern subjects in the United States (2005). They are about what Ruth Wilson Gilmore highlights as spaces of “pre-mature death,” or environments of power that cause Black and other racialized peoples’ untimely elimination (2007). This and other kinds of lethal structurings are producing ever more blatantly murderous effects. These are important examples, yet they are not the sum of relations of power or of power’s *operability*. The planet is more complex. It is saturated with flagrant power relations: colonialism, capitalism, imperialism, racism, *misogynarchies*, speciesism, and other kinds of local manifestations of power that can and cannot be named. Also, some power remains imperceptible, often with dramatically virulent effects.

To begin to constitute *theory-assemblages* that make *freedom-exigent transformation* central, this book suggests and elaborates concepts such as *freedom-exigency*, *subjects-in-socialities* and another, *subaltern-to-dominant continuum*, *liberation-orientation*, and *situated planetarities*.

Power

A second necessary line of flight here concerns coming to a more multidimensional and comprehensive analysis of power. This book is vitally concerned with rethinking relations of power because currently our lack

of understanding is a daunting obstacle to *freedom-life*. Relations of power co-constitute the conditions in which we live. They form and deform us, alienate us from ourselves, each other, and the planet. They block and destroy the will to *freedom-exigency*. They implode, explode, and obliterate *freedom-exigent co-motion*.

This book frontally addresses multiplicities of power and their many kinds of *operabilities*. Most scholarly and activist analyses of power focus on visible power and its apparent effects. That work is extremely important. However, this book equally problematizes imperceptible power that passes under our radar and yet functions intensely. Whether obvious, noticeable, or undetectable at all, relations of power saturate every context across every geopolitical and human scale across the planet. They are part of the very formation of subjects, as Foucault would have it, but also of objects, social and political arrangements, and all of life including its forms that pass for nonlife. It is futile to try to become free without an adequate understanding of the kinds, dimensions, registers, manifestations, silent workings, and effects of power.

I proposed above that a major problem for *freedom-exigent co-motion* is that before it fulfills its promise it gets disrupted, disordered, fragmented, dissolved, even reversed. The most widespread explanation for demise is that powerful actors such as the state, its apparatuses, or other hostile agents act against it. Certainly, across the planet many modes of repression and destruction that attack alliances from their outsides abound. They include targeted assassination, genocide, maiming for incapacitation, incarceration, and slow death of potential insurgents induced by poverty, starvation, (in) toxications, psychic warfare, isolation, and alienation.

Among states' arsenals for *co-motion* destruction are some particularly insidious modes of co-optation. One such tactic is replacement. For instance, in France in 1985, at the height of the powerful grassroots anti-racism movement led by working-class racialized youth, the government stepped in and created its own organization, SOS Racisme (SOS Racism), to derail the earlier movement and substitute its own for it.⁵ SOS Racisme was soon everywhere: in schools, universities, the streets. It forced the grassroots movement into the margins where it eventually suffocated. Another state tactic is selective assimilation to split and deradicalize movements. In a recent pre-Trump phase of homotransnationalism, many Global Northern States and right-wing civilian sectors that were previously homo-allergic began to align around newly acceptable models for "national homosexuality" (i.e., of cisgender homonormative queer subjects

from dominant sectors) configured against the backdrop of monsterized, racialized, queer, and queered Others (Puar 2007; Bacchetta and Haritaworn 2011). They performed a kind of “murderous inclusion” of some properly disciplined queer subjects in a move that made Global Northern gay rights usable, alongside earlier colonial-racial assertions about women’s rights, to judge selective Global Southern states as inherently undemocratic and inequalitarian, to legitimize Northern imperial interventions into the South(s) (Haritaworn et. al. 2013). With the increasing consolidation of extreme-right political power, right-wing-governed countries are shifting backward to pre-homonationalist times. An example is Trump’s redefinition in 2018 for Title IX of gender specifically along heterosexist binary lines, as exclusively male or female, a reductive categorization that—as widely flagged across United States and some international media—flies in the face of science (that demonstrates gender and sex flexibilities and spectrums), demonized queer and trans people, and excluded them from the protections against gender discrimination that are guaranteed by Title IX (Green et. al 2018; *Guardian* 2018; Rivas 2018). After a four-year reprieve, on January 20, 2025, a newly elected Trump signed Executive Order 14188, effectively reiterating his 2018 declaration about exclusive binary sex and stipulating the denial of federal funding to “gender ideology” (a right-wing category defined to encompass any scientific or other research and teaching, advocacy, or activism that question, defy, or bypass the imposed exclusive cisgender hetero sex binary). This example demonstrates how, for some subaltern subjects—here queer and trans people—despite back and forth historical shifts, vulnerability remains a permanent condition.

However, interference by adverse states or other antagonistic forces cannot fully explain the destruction of *freedom-exigent* mobilizations. Unfortunately, all too often the power that saturates the context in which *freedom-exigent* activism emerges is systematically, albeit unintentionally, reproduced inside them. The reiteration of relations of power inside *co-motion* can fragment and extinguish it. To try to understand how this happens, I draw on Foucault’s notion of power as a microphysics that flows, is blocked, melts, crystallizes here and there, disperses, or dissolves, even if I expand on his idea of power and also bring it elsewhere into other realms (Foucault 2001c, 2000a, 1977, 1976). With Foucault in mind, there can be no neat binary between power and resistance. Power contains the potentiality for its own demise; resistance is saturated with power and power gets reproduced within it (see chapters 3, 4, 5). For instance, decolonial activists in France critique French workers’ struggles for ignoring the

conditions of racialized working-class people, thereby reproducing coloniality and racism; this assessment was part of the rationale for the creation of the Parti des indigènes de la République (Party of the Indigenous of the Republic).⁶ At Standing Rock, Native organizers decried some white participants for living off Native generosity, avoiding collective work, and illegitimately speaking for the movement to media, thereby reenacting white settler supremacy (O'Connor 2016). At Occupy Wall Street, some homeless participants highlighted that privileged activists pushed them out to ensure the movement's respectability, ironically based on class; meanwhile, some activists sustained that police sent in ostensibly homeless people to break up the camps (Chen 2011). Women and queer subjects in many insurgencies point to how other activists subject them to sexist and queerphobic violence (Kingsley 2013).

The internal dynamics of power in such mobilizations—as in the daily lives of the people who comprise them—often (not always) unfold without intention. This is because, in the Foucauldian sense, as subject-effects or subjects co-constituted in and by the relations of power that saturate our contexts, we always risk reiterating and reenacting that power, even involuntarily and unknowingly (Foucault 2000b). At times the reproduction of relations of power becomes flagrant and is named in discussions within alliances. Yet, at present, at least some of the power in which we are saturated, in which we are co-constituted as subjects, remains imperceptible even as it performs its devastating operations on us.

One obstacle to understanding how power operates is analytical *subject-centricity*, or making people's agency as wielders of power the center of attention. Nearly all studies of the failures of mobilizations attribute dissolution to actors, whether external or internal to the mobilizations. Yet, *subject-centric* approaches tend to dehistoricize and dematerialize power. They miss many kinds, dimensions, and registers of power, its agencies and operations. They cannot account for how power structures our lives.

Subject-centric analytics also often inadvertently reproduce essentialist assumptions about subjects. They do not necessarily have clarity about what defines people in dominant sectors of society, or an oppressed collectivity or subject. They risk presuming a binary between good allies vs. bad other people who induce, maintain, or intensify harm to subalterns. They frequently imagine the ally as a noble, exceptional, even saintly subject from the dominant social sector in a sea of evil peers (Indigenous Action 2014). This construction can inadvertently place the ally above critique. It also risks reinforcing the idea that the dominant social sector

comprises free-willed individuals who can choose to be allies while oppressed subaltern subjects comprise a nonagentic undifferentiated mass (Da Silva 2007). It can problematically presume that the task of ending oppression naturally belongs to those who most suffer from it, instead of to all people. Such presuppositions about responsibility minimize or erase the commitments, sacrifices, pain, and physical and psychic burdens of subalterns fighting their own (people's) oppression. They can preempt the idea that a subaltern subject can be an ally to other subaltern subjects within and beyond one's own community or social sector. They can unproductively make subaltern subjects judges of privileged allies. In such cases the allies risk getting interpellated as guilty, confessing subjects. Yet, guilt and shame are rarely politically productive affects. Such dynamics can shift the focus away from politics toward moralism, which can drive the now depoliticized dominant ally toward individualized self-help and self-improvement. These mechanisms and ostensible solutions can substitute for actual work to change material conditions that are harmful, even deadly. A *subject-centric* approach often keeps dominant subjects, now in the form of exceptions as allies, at the epicenter of analysis and action, thereby reinforcing the relations of power that *freedom-exigent co-motion* aims to work to end. *Subject-centricity*—which diverts attention away from power's operations and toward its effects on subjects—also risks homogenizing complex entities deemed as enemies, such as the state or global capitalism, and unhelpfully locating power in subjects and institutions as their possession (see chapter 3).

Thus, this book tries to open up how we think about power and its *operability*. It is especially interested in understanding the kinds of power that we cannot yet perceive or identify. For these aims it suggests and expands on concepts such as *situated planetarities*, *co-formations*, *co-productions*, *scattered hegemonies*, *saturations*, and *dilutions of power*, *et cetera*; *x*; and *(in) articulations* (see chapters 2, 3, 4, 5).

Subalternative Sensing, Perception, and Intelligibility

A third, related line of flight is the dynamic constellation comprised of *subalternative sensing*, *perception*, and *intelligibility*. This ensemble aims to free us and propel us out of habits of knowing and meaning making that keep us in chains. *Subalternative sensing*, *perception*, and *intelligibility* is about affirming, developing, or creating radical sensibilities and understandings beyond dominant epistemes and even beyond some normative subaltern

epistemes. Everything, everyone at present is saturated *in-coloniality, in-global-racial-capitalism, in-racialization, in-misogynarchies*. Thus, no current episteme is completely free from the dominant episteme's effects or threats of effects. In this contaminated world, the cluster *subalternative sensing, perception, and intelligibility* incites us to further affirm, expand, and/or create disallowed forms of knowledge and knowledge production. Some already exist in various Native and other Global Southern epistemologies. They are also present in many kinds of nonlinear kinds of reasoning, dreams, deliria, hallucinations, trance states, and visions (see also Bénani et. al. 2025; Bennani 2022; Di Pietro 2020a; Pérez 2019, 2007; Anzaldúa 2009a). This cluster invites us to seek yet other ways of knowing altogether with other subjects and *beings-becomings*. For example, what can I learn about power, subjects, and alliances from a tree, a bird, or a snake beyond those thematics? The constellation *subalternative sensing, perception, and intelligibility* is useful to constructing *freedom-exigent theory-assemblages* that speak to what in chapter 4 I call *situated planetarities*.

But what exactly do the components in *subalternative sensing, perception, and intelligibility* signify and how do they work? First, let us distinguish *subalternative* from *subaltern* and *subalternist*. I discuss *subaltern* in some detail in chapter 2. Here, I will briefly invoke Antonio Gramsci's use of *subaltern* to mean any subordinated subjects *in-relationality* to any dominant subjects. For Gramsci, there are many kinds of subalterns: working-class peoples (vs. factory owners), prisoners (vs. the state and the nonincarcerated), peasants (vs. rural elites and urban dwellers), but also rural elites of inferiorized regions (vs. urban elites in dominant regions). The example of rural elites demonstrates how a same group can be dominant in some relations and subordinate in others. For Gramsci, the subaltern subject cannot stand alone, is never fixed or homogenous. The subaltern is always relative. The above examples suggest how for Gramsci many criteria can define the subaltern: economic, cultural, linguistic, geographic, etc.

To consider the *in-relationality* of subalterns and to account for how multiple kinds of power operate to form subaltern subjects and their interrelations, in chapter 2 I draw specifically on Gramsci to suggest considering subalterns along a dynamic *subaltern-to-dominant continuum*. The notion of a continuum puts into relief not only that there are many kinds of subaltern subjects but moreover that there are many degrees of subalterneity and dominance. Given the real or potential instability of the social realm, the subaltern and the positionality that a subaltern (collectivity or

individual) may occupy at any given point can change. It can all be in flux. In the Gramscian sense, and with Foucault, there is no such thing as an absolute, fixed, forever subaltern.

Occupying a subaltern positionality does not make of the subaltern an inherently resistant subject. There is no natural correspondence between a subaltern social location and a critical political stance. This idea is complicit with some classical decolonial theorizations and some US feminist, lesbian, and queer of color theorizations that attest to how knowledge and ways of knowing are socially situated while refusing a reductionist, essentialist correlation between the subject, the subject's social location, analysis, and political conduct (Fanon 1952; Memmi 1973; Combahee River Collective 1977; Anzaldúa [1987] 2007; Lugones and Spelman 1983; Haraway 1988; Collins 1991). One of power's deadly operations for its own perpetuation is to alienate subaltern subjects from themselves so they will serve the dominant's interests. Among subalterns there is an array not only of different positionalities but also of mindsets.

In contrast, *subalternist* involves a sensibility and a stance oriented for the subaltern in the subaltern's interest. The speaking subject of a subalternist stance is most often the subaltern but can also be allies. A subalternist agenda is a program that is concerned with remedying the subaltern's conditions, via equality, equity or liberation. Unfortunately, a subalternist agenda does not necessarily strive to understand and terminate all oppression, repression, exploitation, occupation, dispossession, extraction, appropriation, subjugation, subjectivation, epistemic violence, spiritual obliteration, psychic suffering, incarceration, inequity, and annihilation. A *subalternist* project can advance the interests of some subalterns while leaving in place social structures and value systems that are murderous for others. Historically some anticolonial national movements worked for "the people's" liberation but left queerphobia intact. To build supportive life spaces for themselves, some Global Northern gentrifying white gay subjects displace people of color—including queers of color—from their homes (Haritaworn 2015a; Hanhardt 2013). Some Global Southern queers reiterate hierarchies of religion, class, and caste in queer movements (Bakshi 2022). Thus, any subaltern might do well to understand that there is always someone more subaltern than thou.

Finally, *subalternative*, as I mobilize the concept, is something entirely different. The term, proposed in the scholarly work of the sociologist Nacira Guénif-Souilamas and operationalized in some grassroots movements in France, signals a radical, critical subaltern politics far beyond

identitarian affirmations, equality aims, or any partial liberation. Inspired by these renderings, herein I use *subalternative* in its sense of an alternative, an opening, a nonrepetition, an escape from reductive oppositionality. I also understand it as beyond the binary comprised of the presumed-to-be internally homogenized, bounded terms *subaltern* vs. *dominant*. The alternative that *subalternative* signifies can be oriented around the lives of, and in the interests of, the very most subaltern subjects. This way of thinking about *subalternative* is concerned with the *freedom-exigencies* of all, including those who are positioned in and outside the social fabric beneath the subjects who are perceived in dominant fields of intelligibility to be subaltern. A *subalternative* politics requires the freedom of the most extreme subalternized subjects *in-context* everywhere. It has no use for reforming presently murderous relations of power, such as equal rights for just some subalterns in coloniality, capitalism, imperialism, racism, and *misogynarchies*. Instead, a *subalternative* political project would demolish and transform relations of power, unleash floods of creativity, and invent thrive-able modes of life for all people, *beings-becomings*, and the planet. In keeping with a Gramscian notion of the subaltern as a subject *in-relationality* across many kinds of relations of power, *subalternative* describes *freedom-exigent* thought, feeling, enactments, practices, action, in any and all registers: economic, cultural, symbolic, psychic, energetic. *Subalternative* is fully incompatible with dominant assemblages of power. It is a frontal attack on them. And it is elsewhere from them.

What of the grouping *sensing, perception, and intelligibility* in the term *subalternative sensing, perception, and intelligibility*? Why is this cluster necessary to *freedom-exigent theory-assemblages*? How can we use it in analyses and activisms?

A different kind of *sensing, perception, and intelligibility*—one that is *subalternative*—is vital to comprehend the world, to make sense of it otherwise, to radically change it. At present we are saturated in dominant epistemes and fields of intelligibility (Fanon 1952; Appadurai 1984; Maldonado-Torres 2008). They impose categories, presuppositions, logics, assumptions, conclusions, and common sense (Foucault 2000c). They limit our understanding and our capacities to imagine *freedom-exigent* elsewheres for the present and future. They act on our thought processes in destructive ways but also manifest, crystallize, self-perpetuate, reorganize themselves, in economies, institutions, culture, the body, the psyche. They occupy every dimension. They induce habits of thought, corporeality, affect, dispositions, tendencies. They cause numbness, forgetting, erasure.

Everywhere they enact epistemicide. And with it they induce what Trinh T. Minh-ha (2016) calls *lovecide* (death of love) and more broadly *affecticide*, or the obliteration of many kinds of *feeling*, *sensing*, and *perception*. Across vast parts of the planet, we now no longer know who we would have been, what and how we could have thought or felt, what kind of world we might have created had this lethal sensory and epistemic violence not occurred.

In this entrapment, the cluster *subalternative sensing*, *perception*, and *intelligibility* gives us hope. It reminds us how—even if we are formed in and caught in relations of power—we can escape. *Subalternative sensing*, *perception*, and *intelligibility* opens an exit, a line of flight, in dominant epistemes. Some of its methods are dreaming, hallucinating, trancing, states of spirit possession, and envisionings otherwise.

Some phenomena related to *subalternative sensing*, *perception*, and *intelligibility* already coexist beside or below dominant epistemes. One area is subaltern knowledges and knowledge production. It is happening across the Global North(s) and South(s). For example, Gramsci (1991) refers to nondominant knowledges and ways of knowing in Italy's impoverished southern provinces and islands as "popular" or "subaltern" knowledges. He describes them as amalgams formed by constantly selecting, integrating, and reframing dominant cultural elements into popular culture. Foucault writes of "subjugated knowledges," defined as either past dominant knowledges that are now disqualified or present nondominant knowledges that were not universalized (Foucault 1969, 2003). For Foucault we can reanimate "subjugated knowledges" by excavating their "genealogical fragments" and putting them "in circulation with each other," even if they risk getting "recoded in the dominant grid of intelligibility" (Foucault 2003, 10–11). Deleuze and Guattari (1975) invoke "minor knowledges" developed by populations that are sociological (not necessarily numerical) minorities. For them, "minor knowledges" sustain the populations' life and have implications for political resistance.

Some subaltern-generated theories, concepts, and approaches are actually closer than near, in fact already within, the realm of *subalternative sensing*, *perception*, and *intelligibility*. An example is Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of *la facultad*, a "survival tactic" that permits perception that is different from the dominant's expectations (Anzaldúa [1987] 2007). *La facultad* opens up alternate consciousness so the subject can intuit danger at the surface and the "soul" in the depth (Anzaldúa [1987] 2007). It is about instant sensing beyond the rational, a perception in surface realities of deeper realities. *La facultad* makes knowledge available to the subject through corporeal

sensation. A related Anzaldúan notion is her queer elaboration of *ne-planta*, an Aztec concept to describe a transitional state in which humans “cross the border into other subjective levels of awareness,” becoming “a tree, a coyote” or “another person” (Anzaldúa 2009a, 182). There is also the work of the Bolivian Native Aymara lesbian Julieta Paredas. She offers a conceptualization of knowing and *being-becoming* through a kind of fleshy human oneness that subverts coloniality, neoliberal individualism, the capitalist privatization of corporeality, and misogyny all at once. Paredas remarks: “We are flesh, we are people, we are not enemies, we are one. I am your body, you are my body.”⁷ Finally, an example of a subaltern practice of *subalternative sensing, perception, and intelligibility* is when queers in queerphobic societies develop “gaydar,” or the capacity to *sense, perceive*, and render *intelligible* other queers even when the latter, generally for survival, are enacting heterosexual cisgender drag.

Many current forms of subaltern-inspired approaches to knowledge production reject dominant reason altogether because they associate it with colonialism, Eurocentric enlightenment, and racialized, gendered, speciesist classification and typologization schemes based in selected biological, climatic, or cultural criteria. *Subalternative sensing, perception, and intelligibility* is fully complicit with this anticolonial stance and yet, at the same time, can find value in some forms of dominant reason. Indeed, opposition to dominant reason is not inherently incompatible with power; it can even be lethally aligned with it. For example, in the United States and Brazil, evangelism—which claims “spiritual” ways of knowing against Western science—bolsters Trump and Bolsonaro (Amar 2013). In Uganda, Pentecostal divine knowledge is used to argue for the death penalty for homosexuals (Ekiné and Abbas 2013).

The constellation *subalternative sensing, perception, and intelligibility* is intuitively aware of and has an aversion to dominant epistemes. It is allied with the below and the outside of dominant sociality. It can induce clarity about dominant knowledges, ways of knowing, and ways of life with which it is *co-present*.

Such a relation of *co-presence*, of dominant and *subalternative sensing, perception, and intelligibility* coexisting in a same time and space, can be read through the city of Paris. Dominant (white) French people can feel entitled to the space of Paris as an effect of their co-constitution as subjects in French nationalism and northern European supremacy. Yet, racialized French people who are massively concentrated in the “new colonial space” of the banlieues (racialized working-class suburbs) often have a troubled,

doubled relation to Paris (Bancel and Blanchard 2002, 81). On the one hand, Paris has some familiar, hospitable neighborhoods with concentrations of racialized people and ethnic small businesses: Barbès, Belleville, la Goutte-d'Or, Ménilmontant. White supremacist elites generally avoid these areas unless out for an entertaining evening of cultural consumption, or to perform the (culinary and other) gesture that bell hooks calls “eating the other” (1992). Paris also has fluid sites of safety such as central Châtelet where the density of transnational tourists from across the globe and across classes can allow for anonymity (Bacchetta 2009a). On the other hand, for working-class racialized people much of Paris can feel distant, closed, foreign, dominating, wealthy, white supremacist. It has many intense anxiety zones.

One such disconcerting spot for many French racialized people is the Latin Quarter. Among relatively dominant subjects, the Latin Quarter is famous for its bourgeois cafés, universities, theaters, and restaurants. It is a favorite hub for elite and middle-class foreign tourists. However, a closer consideration of the place with subaltern interrelationality in mind reveals a world of distress. To understand this, only one temporal-spatiality there need be invoked: the massacre of Algerian nationalist demonstrators on October 17, 1961. This event indelibly marked Algerian descendants in France and has repercussions for other racialized people, too. The success of the 2005 film *Caché* (Hidden) by Michael Haneke suggests that the effects of the psychic and political repression of October 17, 1961, on white French subjects who are directly entwined with its history can also be considerable (Chekkat and Mokaddem 2013).

October 17, 1961, began as an anticolonial demonstration in Paris (Lambert 2021). It was organized by the Algerian National Liberation Front against French colonialism and for Algerian independence. Between twenty and thirty thousand Algerians—mainly adults but also some children—from Paris and its outskirts planned to converge in three areas in Paris. Before they reached their destinations, the French police attacked them with batons and guns. At Saint-Michel and Saint-Germain in the Latin Quarter police opened fire with live bullets. Many demonstrators were assassinated right there. Others, to avoid getting shot, jumped off the Saint Michel Bridge into the river Seine and drowned. Witnesses saw police throw dead bodies into the Seine throughout the night. Today the number of deaths is still under dispute. Over 10,000 demonstrators were arrested. Officially 260 were wounded.

The temporal-spatiality of October 17, 1961, is alive in the Latin Quarter today and in the hearts and corporeal experience of many subalternly

racialized subjects. The massacre's ghostly insistence is probably most intensely present for survivors and direct descendants of the martyrs and survivors. It is also far from forgotten by other Algerians, Maghrebians, francophone racialized people and allies. For instance, on October 17, 2016, the massacre was publicly commemorated when the artist Kader Attia opened a restaurant-café-cum-meeting-place called *La Colonie* (the Colony, with a bar through the letters). In 2022, the fictional film *Ossekine* in four episodes, which portrays the racist police murder of the Algerian-French student Malik Ossekine the night of December 5 to 6, 1986, in the Latin Quarter, additionally invokes October 17, 1961. In sum, for many, earlier and today to walk through the Latin Quarter is to feel the massacre's haunting. It is to *sense* a special anxiety in the body: a rapid pulse, blood rushing into the head, short gasps, vacillations of anger and numbness, an all-too-present bond, and a disconnect. In contrast, the state, most white French subjects, and unknowing tourists continue to felicitously romanticize that site. Colonial-racial privilege enables them to not know or to unremember October 17, 1961. They sense nothing about it. The blind spot left from its obliteration blocks their *sensing* and *perception* of the parallel, differential experience of immediate subalterns. That experience becomes for dominant subjects inaccessible, unintelligible.

Dominant ignorance about and forgetting of October 17, 1961, is further reinforced in dissimilar receptions of sporadic subaltern repoliticizations of the massacre's space. Throughout the years, the Latin Quarter has been re-marked as a setting of protest, from demonstrations for immigrant rights to the bombing of the San Michel subway station. Dominant subjects do not usually *perceive* these actions as related to October 17, 1961. Instead, they imagine (every time) that uprisings by racialized people suddenly come out of nowhere, take place anywhere, thereby confirming colonial narratives about the colonized's unprovoked, essentialized aggression.

The blind spot that the massacre has been made to occupy in the French hegemonic field of intelligibility is all the more disturbing in light of a long-held Parisian consensus, left to right, about the political signification of city space. Space was at the center of post-Letterist and post-Situationalist *détournement* (turning around, derailment) and *récupération* (recuperation, reappropriation, and resignification) practices. Today a sort of spatial agreement is apparent in any mass demonstration in Paris when activists of any political persuasion rename streets after their ideals. Habitually they make placards, bring ladders, and cover official street signs with their own. A popular rename for the left, now recuperated by the right, is

Rue de la Liberté (Freedom Street). Of course, the right defines freedom very differently. Anyway, with this and October 17, 1961, in mind we can understand how human subjects inhabit, *perceive*, make *sense* of, feel, and act in different *co-present temporal-spatialities* in profoundly incommensurate ways. No *freedom-exigent* solidarity is possible without *sensing* and undoing that gap.

To shift our attention to *subalternative sensing, perception, and intelligibility* can induce clarity about power through its effects. On the one hand, confrontation with power can provoke corporal-somatic sensations, conditions, and states of *being-becoming*. We can learn much from the uncomfortable feeling of bodily (im)balance, temporal acceleration or deceleration, the pull of gravity, awareness of the weight of bodily parts, the spine giving way, rising or falling temperature, pain, the sudden feeling of aging, rapid heartbeat, gushing of stomach juices, blood speedily flowing, ghostly presence, visitations by ancestors, simultaneous disparate psychic states. On the other hand, the radically *freedom-exigent* solidarities that the ensemble *subalternative sensing, perception, and intelligibility* has the potential to induce go beyond simply adopting a common political platform. This knowing together can—like the force of love—set in motion a total realignment of every cell in our bodies. It can seed new kinds of intersubjectivities, collectivities, and kin. It can incite us to create other forms of life together.

Operability

The fourth axis here is the Foucauldian-Deleuzian notion of *operability*. It is an approach to understanding power, subjects, and *co-motion*. *Operability* shifts attention away from the habitual question of *why* anyone or anything comes about, falls apart, or flourishes to *how* phenomena occur. *Operability* was developed by Foucault in dialogue with Deleuze decades ago but has hardly been noticed by scholars anywhere (Deleuze 1986; Deleuze and Guattari 1972; Foucault 2001e). *Operability* does not appear in any Foucauldian or Deleuzian dictionaries in French or English. It has not been the sustained object of any scholarship. Yet, this book suggests that *operability* has enormously productive consequences for analysis. *Operability* brings into focus the actual workings of power, subjects, and *co-motion* in contextual conditions at different geopolitical and human scales.

Operability moves against the grain of most dominant approaches to *co-motion* today. Generally, dominant approaches underscore causality or the *why* of origins and of cause-effect, goals, programs, or actors. They

focus on subjects, movements, and agency. They generally confine analysis to theoretical contributions drawn solely from Global Northern contexts.

Some classic causality examples are the social psychological works of Gustave Le Bon on crowds and Robert Gurr on frustration-aggression. Causality also animates sociological focuses on disequilibrium inspired by Talcott Parsons. It informs interest-group-conflict theories from Charles Tilly to Samuel Huntington. Today many disparate social scientists study causal rationale for political alliances. Some examples are Alberto Melucci's theory of how submerged networks of subjects precede new social movements and help them to gel; rational choice paradigms according to which people make rational decisions; and Theda Skocpol's important work on multiregister conflicts involving state, elite, and working-class actors simultaneously. *Causal* concerns are also prominent in activisms across the political spectrum. The pamphlet *Indignez-vous!* (Get Outraged!) by Stefan Hessel that incited recent anticapitalist movements in France, Spain, and elsewhere highlights the affect *indignation* (outrage) as the "motive" for action (2010, 14, 16, 11). All of these works provide important reflections. *Operability* does not seek to eliminate questions of why or what. It is not in a binary oppositional relation to the why or what. Instead, *operability* highlights the how, to "present these questions in a different way," to include a different "complex configuration of realities" in the analysis (Foucault 2000b, 336–37).

Goal-centric approaches—defined as those that make social movement aims, objectives, or programs the focal point—are both useful and limited. They guide us on our path. However, they can also block, invisibilize, or ignore social movements' current and future potential innovations. Above I referenced Foucault's idea that goal fixations are dangerous and prohibit invention. I pointed to The Invisible Committee's sense that objectives are easily co-opted. Instead, to highlight *operability* is to recognize the "invention of modes of life, of modes of desire" as a necessary dimension to what I call *freedom-exigent transformation* (Benasayag and Sztulwarl 2009, 151).

Subject-centric analyses that make social actors pivotal, too, bring us both insights and problems. They unfortunately rely on dominant notions of the subject, agency, and collective action. This leads them to fail to historicize and contextualize the relations of power in which subjects are formed and operate. *Subject-centric* analytics end up negating many subaltern subjects and *beings-becomings* and blocking *subalternative* understandings (see chapters 1, 2). This book suggests that the kinds of social movements and

individual or collective subjects that are currently intelligible in dominant fields of intelligibility, while certainly important, are not the sole or even main agents in *co-motion* today. The present is a time of many differential subject, intersubjectivity, and collective formations, stages, intensities, and densities of *co-motion* (see chapter 5).

Most academic and activist approaches to *co-motion*—in the Global North(s) and often in the South(s)—are saturated in dominant *Global-Northern-centricity* (Western-Euro-centricity and US-centricity together). The bulk of dominant Western European and US knowledge production today prolongs earlier theories born from those contexts' empirics and fields of intelligibility. *Operability* can help bring into relief that which is hidden inside and outside those contexts. It can uncover and highlight that which is under erasure.

However, *operability* is not about infinite additions of kinds of relations of power and subjects that have been previously unnoticed. It is not additive. *Operability* moves away from encyclopedism or claims to exhaustively identify and record. *Operability* also takes leave of comparative approaches that rely on standardized, universalized dominant criteria through which to perceive and judge. Dominant criteria tend to render imperceptible any relation of power, any subject, that does not fit the grid or to assign minor status to whatever fails to conform to dominant models. Instead, *operability* clarifies how relations of power, subjects, and *co-motion* are composed, splintered, fused, amalgamated with, and work with other messy fragments within and beyond the borders that ostensibly define them. This shift in perspective ensures that relations of power, subjects, and *co-motion* are understood as agentic multiplicities.

Archival Encounters and Critical Conceptual Wanderings

This book brings together for analysis several kinds of sources primarily from France, India, Italy, and the United States from the 1970s to present. These are all places where I have lived, including in political exile (mainly Paris, also Rome) and post-exile, been intellectually engaged, studied, and/or taught. Most importantly, I have been intensely active in social movements, in universities, and sometimes in activism (as a musician and a writer of poetry) in all of them. I continue a strong relationship with each one, with its history, theoretical inventions, and activist and activist creations. Each of the four sites—and especially people, ideas, and actions

in each—is a permanent part of my most intimate relational, intellectual, activist, and human formation, across my past and present and in how I envision my futurity. As a queer subject from and in a multiply racially, culturally mixed family that encompasses both working-class and middle-class subjects, across the locations of this study and more broadly in the world the brownness of my body is variably positioned and my experiences shift. This situation continually incites and nourishes my thinking. In this book it kindles some of the concepts I suggest and develop, such as *subaltern-to-dominant continuum*; *situated planetarity*; *sensing, perception*, and *intelligibility*; and *reductive evidence*.

The book takes seriously theory produced inside but also beyond the genres that are generally recognized as valid for theory-production in academies across the Global North(s) and South(s). Some such major theoretical sources here include activist, artist, and social movement analytical materials: tracts, leaflets, pamphlets, banners, posters, art exhibits, graffiti, poetry, slam, music, theater performances, comic books, political cartoons, film, and words and illustrations sent across social media including Facebook, YouTube, blogs, Instagram and X. I also draw on my own participant-observation in academic spaces and in social movement actions and events in each of these sites. I make use of my own reflections on my different kinds of *sensings in-context*. Some actions and events herein are temporally-spatially brief: demonstrations, sit-ins, graffiti zaps, music concerts, jam sessions, film showings, poetry slams, art exhibits, and group meetings. Others are more extensive: long boycotts, experience in musical groups, and life in squats or communal homes. The sources additionally encompass *testimonio* and personal narratives of an array of activists and artists. They range from long-term dialogues to collective polylogues of varying lengths to extremely brief interactions. They include elements outside general consideration such as various forms of gossip. The book operationalizes governmental reports and dominant and alternative media such as films, TV interviews, and journalists' accounts. I reflect with an array of kinds of critical thought produced in each site studied here.

I engage the sources in their original languages: French, Italian, English, (oral) Hindi, and sometimes Spanish. Many vital primary sources here are previously unpublished. Some are in print with limited circulation. All translations unless otherwise indicated are my own. Many of the subjects and collectivities who created the archival items are unknown outside their immediate contexts. This book brings sources from several languages into conversation with each other and makes some formerly untranslated

feminist and queer materials accessible to English-language audiences for the first time.

The book deeply interacts with knowledge and ways of knowledge production in each site. France, India, Italy, and the United States are not simply places that provide data to analyze. They are all locations where critical theorizations are produced. Instead of performing *imperial white-out* by using dominant critical theory and dominant categories from the United States or continental Western Europe to understand empirics elsewhere, a move that erases contextuality, distortedly reframes and resignifies data and performs epistemic violence, this book connects with both theorizations and empirics from each site. It is in conversation with sets of critical dominant, subaltern, subalternist, and *subalternative* analytics *in-context*. I have learned immensely from living extensively inside and deeply engaging with theoretical and activist productions in each of these spaces even if I rather consistently reposition my inquiry. Often their insights enable such reorientations.

Importantly, the book's focus on France, Italy, India, and the United States has conceptual, practical, and activist implications. Each place has different relations to knowledge production and activism. In several of them there is much more fluidity between the academy, theory, and activism than in the United States. For example, in Italy there is no real split between academic critiques and what Kath Weston (1991) calls "street theory." The knowledge produced inside and outside the university is an integral part of collective practice (Suárez-Krabbe 2011). In India, too, there is academic-activist dialogue and fusion, mainly around class analysis but also sometimes around analytics of gender, colonialism, capitalism, casteism, and religion. Second, each site in this ensemble is formed through distinct assemblages of power in a planetary context of power. To work with the four places is to unfix our conceptual and activist concerns from the confines of any one location.

However, this expansive conceptual and activist engagement also presents problems. A major challenge is to avoid plucking theories, concepts, and practices out of any given context and expecting them to be operational elsewhere. Instead, here I suggest a deep historical contextualization. Within each country there are dominant and subaltern epistemes, each with their distinct presuppositions, categories, logics, likely conclusions, and habits of meaning making. There are also disparate practices of *co-motion*. It is imminently helpful to think about how theories, concepts, and practices emerge, in which historical periods they became salient, what

work they do or cannot do *in-context*. I have found it useful to reflect on how they travel, where they can and cannot go and why, and in sites of arrival what they mean for the most extremely subaltern subjects.

To be mindful of these challenges this book tries to enact what I call *critical conceptual wandering*. In his classic essay “Travelling Theory,” Edward Said warns that the movement of theory from person to person, place to place, or from one historical moment to another can result in misreadings, reductions, reframings, and institutionalizations into new dogmas (1983). One current example is the racist use in France of US critiques of US racism to construct France by comparison as exceptional, as without racism (Soumaharo 2020; Guinhut 2020). This same tendency to imagine racism as not-here but rather as concentrated elsewhere—generally in the United States alone—exists more widely across Western Europe (El-Tayeb 2011). Another example is the popularity in the US academy of postcolonial theory that attacks British colonialism as compared to the quasi-total lack of US interest in US Native studies analyses of US settler colonialism (Byrd and Rothberg 2011; Cheyfitz 2002).

Said, this time in his “Travelling Theory Revisited,” also suggests that such unfortunate receptions and redomestications of theory can be an effect of elements that exist—or are missing—in the original theory (2001). His observation should incite us to be attentive to possible nefarious uses of our *theory-assemblages* and to proactively prevent that by building incompatibility with power into the theory itself. For example, theory in the Black radical tradition that engages with planetary relations of power such as colonialism, globalized raciality, and (planetary) racial capitalism is much less susceptible to recuperation. Said additionally points out that at times a theory’s geographical extension can result in enhanced critical potential. Accordingly, US Black liberation forces used Frantz Fanon’s work on Blackness and on Algeria to better understand US racism and to connect US Black liberation with much of the colonized world.

With this in mind, the aim of *critical conceptual wandering* is to contribute to *theory-assemblages* that preempt unhelpful interpretations and redomestications, and instead try diligently to ensure radical critical potentiality both *in-context* and beyond. This book invites the reader directly into this messy process. A litmus test is to ask, How is this or that theory compatible or not with relations of power in its context and across the planet? How does it engage or not colonialism, coloniality, imperialism, capitalism, racism, *misogynarchies*, speciesism, the destruction of the planet? What is its use to the most subaltern subjects *in-context* and beyond?

A consideration of any theory's relation to power is complicated by the fact that every relation of power has many disparate contextual manifestations, dimensions, registers, and extents (see chapters 3, 4). Let us take coloniality as an example. Each colonizing country herein engages in several kinds of colonization (Bacchetta 2023). The United States is a genocidal settler colony on stolen Native land, an invading colonizer of other lands and an imperial power that intervenes militarily and economically across the Global South(s) officially and unofficially (Lee-Oliver 2019; Churchill 2004; Back and Solomos 2000; Stember 1976). France is an administrative colonizer (Senegal, Morocco), a former settler colonizer (Algeria), a neo-colonizer (the DOM-TOM), and in some countries a necropolitical imperial power, as in its drone interventions in Syria and elsewhere (Mbembe 2019, 2001; Khiari 2006). India is a commercial and administrative postcolony that won political independence from Britain in 1947 and now dominates in its region. India has internal colonies (Kashmir) and arguably a colonial relation to some internal social sectors: Dalits, Bahujans, Adivasis, Muslims, and other religious minorities. Like many other postcolonies, India remains structured by colonial state apparatus models such as the British parliamentary, and educational and juridical systems. It officially adopted some colonial categories to describe internal subalterns, such as "backward caste" or "tribe." Italy, a place that—like other parts of Europe—has always been home to Italians of color of many shades, including racially mixed Italians, in this case since the Roman Empire, is also multiply colonial (El Tayeb 2011). It is a colonizer first of its own internal south and islands, and then under fascism as it tried to dominate in East Africa, failed, and left lasting, devastating damage in its path (Lombardi-Diop and Romeo 2012; Ben-Ghiat and Fuller 2005; Gramsci 1995, 1992). Historically, Italy's impoverished southern areas were drained by massive peasant and worker population out-migrations. Today its south is a site of substantial in-migrations from war torn and devastated areas of Eastern Europe, Africa, and the Middle East (Hawthorne 2022; Paolos and Maglio 2015; Schneider 1998; Patterson 1982, vii). Currently people of color in Italy are organized into social movements that reimagine borders, citizenship, and belonging (Giglioli et al. 2017). In sum, no relation of power is a monolith. This book directly addresses these complexities.

Yet another factor is that each country discussed in this book has its own historical political movements and priorities that bear on the critical theory that authors located there produce. For example, unlike in the United States, both Italy and France have recent histories of successful labor

movements. Scholars, activists, and artists there, regardless of the issue or movement in question, continue to make capitalism, labor politics, and class central to their work. They are variously integral to other social movement analytics and practices too: against racism, antiwar, proimmigration, feminist, queer, and trans.

Presently there are important shifts in scholarship and social movements in the four countries of this book. In India subaltern knowledge production—by Dalits, Bhajunas, and Adivasis—after erasure for centuries is now increasingly unignorable. In France, where colonialism is dominantly dismissed, postcolonial subjects—citizens, legal residents, or undocumented—who remain marginalized and largely spatially segregated, can no longer be totally discounted. They are a political force. Everywhere powers are resisting these conceptual shifts. For instance, in May 2017, the French government officially banned a conference in Paris on intersectionality in education. It was only partially reinstated after much protest.

Another aspect of *critical conceptual wandering* is limitations carried by language. In this book I bring everything into English translation. This is not a neutral transition. English is saturated in colonial-racial planetary relations of power. It is the most widely spoken language in the world. Out of the world's 7.8 billion people, largely as an effect of colonialism and insertion into capitalism, approximately 1.35 billion speak English. It has created widespread murderous linguistic and epistemic violence across the planet. Yet, it is not the only dominant language of this book's archive and not the only one to have done extensive damage.

To consider creating a feminist, queer, decolonial translation into English is to encounter what I call the *pre-translation* elements of othered languages that precede it, that it absorbs, marginalizes, silences, works to eliminate but cannot fully suppress (Bacchetta 2022). I think about *pre-translation* elements as the *co-presence* in the translated text, here in English, of traces from those languages and of the lives of their speaking subjects (Bacchetta 2025b). *Pre-translation* languages are generally (not always) subalternized in relation to a dominant one. For example, depending on an author's mother tongue or prior languages, Kashmiri, Urdu, or Gujarati may be *pre-translation* languages in English texts, as may be Amazigh, Arabic, or Wolof in French texts. Further, Kashmiri, Manipuri, and other languages may be *pre-translation* elements in Hindi. *Pre-translation* languages may manifest in the dominant language or in the translated text via sporadic untranslated terms, or logics, repetitions, rhythms, or silences. They may be highly hearable in some dominant languages, such as in English spoken

in India or Nigeria. In other cases, they may be fully present but less noticeable, as in the difference in Italy between standard Italian (which evolved out of Tuscany's language) and subalternized southern regional languages. Finally, as I have suggested elsewhere, we get into a world of complexities when we translate from one dominant language (herein French, Italian, English as used in India, each with their own *pre-translation* traces) into another dominant language (here English as used in the United States, again with its own prior *pre-translation* manifestations).

Yet another problem is that a term in English can mean something different in the same context depending on the speaking subject. When I call myself a dyke it is different from some random queerphobe calling me a dyke. When Corinna Gould, leader and spokesperson for the Ohlone people, pronounces the term *land* she means something entirely distinct from its English language dictionary definition. Also, theorizations from different periods in the same site may use an identical term variably. The term *gay* is a case in point. Today in the United States, *gay* most often invokes an idea of cisgender homonormative white gay men. Yet historically, *gay* signified a variety of queers, including lesbians and trans people. For instance, *gay* is found as such in early in texts by the 1970s collective Dyketactics! and is a self-designation by trans activists in film interviews at the 1966 Compton's Cafeteria rebellion (Dyketactics! Archive; Silverman and Stryker 2005). The Althusserian linguist Michel Pêcheux reminds us how temporal-spatial contexts matter: "Words, expressions, propositions" do not have inherent significations but instead are effects of their construction in "social-historical" processes (1975, 144). My *critical conceptual wandering* work with *theory-assemblages* tries to be attentive to such complexities.

Structure, Flow

This book is organized not around but rather to surface the four main lines of flight explained above. In keeping with its focus on reimagining power and *co-motion*, and on creating useful *theory-assemblages*, the chapters are not arranged into cases or situations but instead according to conceptual constellations.

Chapter 1, "Co-Motion at Present," provides historical groundings for the rest of the book. It critically engages with a broad legacy of intersectional and decolonial feminist, queer, trans and other subaltern theories and practices of *co-motion* from the 1970s until today in the main four focal sites of this book. It differs from the other chapters in that it serves

as an entry point to open up other directions and registers for what follows. However, readers who are impatient with history and are eager to get to the more creative solution-oriented parts of the book may want to skip it and possibly return later. In sum, chapter 1 asks: What can we learn from limitations and closures, or from openings and potentialities, of prior *co-motion* that is useful to think with today? How is power reproduced or not in *co-motion* at present? What exactly are the problems that we need to solve, escape from, or circumvent? For the purposes of discussion, the chapter is structured into clusters of disparate kinds of *co-motion*. It shows how differences among them matter. It proposes that to avoid reproducing destructive relations of power inside *co-motion*, and to prevent obliteration from without, we need to think and speak about power and subjects very differently.

Chapter 2, “Imaginations Otherwise,” is designed to begin to overcome some of the conceptual and lexical constraints that chapter 1 identifies. It suggests some new concepts to think with: *co-motion* (again, a large rubric for ways of coming together, including solidarity, union, coalition, network, association, etc.); *subjects-in-sociality-and-another* (a way to consider how subjects come into being with each other [*in-sociality*] and to take account of the most subaltern subjects that are otherwise erased [*the and another*]); *subaltern-to-dominant continuum* (drawing on Gramsci, the recognition of multiple kinds of subalterns and of dominants, the range of their locations in power and the importance of context); *liberation-orientation* (a tendency, yearning, desire to stay alive, inhabit the world differently, invent new forms of life); *freedom-exigency* (a refusal of compromise with any relations of power, an urgency and requirement for *freedom-life* now).

Chapter 3, “Co-Formations, Co-Productions,” continues the attempt that chapter 2 began of proposing other ways of thinking and articulating, here specifically about multiplicities of power and their inseparable *operabilities*. Chapter 3 engages with prior *dominant-to-subaltern* theorizations of power before suggesting two new concepts for rethinking power for our times: *co-formations* and *co-productions*. With *co-formations* we can consider small scale assemblages of power such as gender, sexuality, race, caste, and class together. With *co-productions* we can reflect on power as manifested across large-scale temporal-spatialities such as coloniality, coloniality, capitalism, slavery, imperialism, *misogynarchies*, and speciesism.

Chapter 4, “Situated Planetarities,” again takes up the work of rethinking power for our times. Its key contribution is *situated planetarities*, an approach to power, subjects, and *co-motion* based in a relatively small

geographical or human scale with at the same time the entire planet in mind. Our analysis and praxis become situated in a specific site and planetary at once. Another feature of this chapter is its proposal of additional concepts with which to think about situated planetaries. An example is the range of *political amnesias*.

Chapter 5, “Other Sensings in Praxes,” shifts our discussion to provide a living example of how some concepts from the book’s *theory-assemblages* can operate in analyses and in actions, and also how a specific context might spark yet other conceptual tools. The chapter focuses on one place—Paris, France—and on the immensely productive political and affective work by one set of subalternized subjects: racialized queers+, trans+, and dykes+ and allies.⁸ The focus on the microscale context enables a detailed analysis. It begins with a *situated planetarities* perspective to explain the site and its relation to the world especially via colonialism, capitalism, enslavement, and immigration. The chapter suggests a *backwards-sideways* method, or a genealogical and horizontally relational orientation. It explains how the present *co-motion* is informed by a related history and concurrent unfolding of racialized queer+, trans+, and dyke+ and allied analytics, experiences, practices, and actions. It affirms the possibility of creating a *freedom-exigent* present and futurity. The chapter’s concluding remarks wrap up both the chapter and the book.

I thank in advance readers who will be attentive to the book’s voicings and silences, who will pursue despite its inadequacies and limitations. Wherever you are, I hope you might find in the book something useful—in complicity, oppositionally, or elsewhere—toward the *freedom-exigent co-motion* that we urgently need to imagine and enact now.

DUKE

UNIVERSITY
PRESS

Introduction

In this introduction and throughout the book, I use italics for concepts that I propose or reimagine and for words in languages other than English that I translate in the text. In cases where an author expressly does not translate a non-English word—such as in Gloria Anzaldúa’s writing—I respect the author’s desire and leave the word untranslated.

- 1 Importantly, Angela Davis draws attention to this situation in her blurb on the back of a recent collection of Lélia Gonzalez’s work published in Brazil by writing that Brazilians can learn much more from Gonzalez about Black women in Brazil than from her work about the United States.
- 2 Abya Yala is a Native name for the life space encompassed by what colonizers call Latin America or Central and South America. It comes from the Guna language, where it means, literally, “land in its full maturity,” and where it invokes a specific kind of affective and ancestral relation to the land. Prior to colonialism, the Guna lived on what is now the northern coast of Colombia. Today they live on the northern coast of Panama. The term came into broader use after it emerged in the context of the Second International Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities in Abya Yala, held in Quito in 2004. Many scholars argue that the term Latin America erases Native, Black, and other subjects of color while Eurocentrically foregrounding the Spanish, Portuguese, and other (white) Europeans. The idea of North, Central, and South America presumes colonial history as origin (i.e., via Amerigo Vespucci) while disappearing Native prior, contemporary, and future existence.
- 3 Turtle Island is a Native name for the life space that colonizers call the United States, Canada, and Mexico. It is linked to the turtle creation stories of many peoples. Aotearoa is the Native Maori name for what colonizers call New Zealand.
- 4 I use the concept-term *misogynarchies*—a combination of *misogyny* and *archy*—as a large rubric to acknowledge many disparate kinds of systematizations of gender and sexuality relations of power, including but also beyond patriarchy. *Misogynarchies* is a specifically decolonial,

co-formational, and *co-productional* concept. For more elaboration, see especially chapter 4 and Bacchetta (2025d).

- 5 When discussing people in the French context, who in the United States and elsewhere identify as people of color, I use the term *racialized*, as it makes more sense in the French context. See also note 8 herein, as well as chapter 5.
- 6 See, for example, PIR (n.d.).
- 7 Conversation about intersubjectivities in *feminismo comunitario* (community feminism) with Julieta Paredas, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, December 5, 2018.
- 8 In chapter 5 I explain why, in the French context, the term *racialized queer+*, *trans+*, and *dyke+* makes more sense than *LGBTIQ+* or *queer and trans of color*.

Chapter 1. Co-Motion at Present

Epigraph 1: In the 1990s the slogan was readapted as “An army of lovers cannot lose” by Queer Nation and other groups.

- 1 Historically, there are multiple, conflicting, racialized constructions of Henry Louis Gates as a Black male intellectual. See Hazel Carby’s analysis of the pimp-like “Moghul” image assigned to him in a 1990 *New York Times* article (1992, 187).
- 2 See the initial critique of the universalization of the notion of patriarchy and my discussion of *misogynarchies* in note 4 of this book’s introduction and the more extensive treatment in chapter 4. See also Bacchetta 2025c.
- 3 I am grateful to Sandhya Luthar and Sonia Jabbar, leaders of the CALERI uprising, for our conversations about CALERI over many decades, including during and since the events.
- 4 Many subaltern groups articulate nation rhetoric without qualifying as nation projects. An example is the 1990s US group Queer Nation, which had neither territorial space nor classic or alternative nation aspirations.
- 5 Entitled *Non credere d’avere dei diritti* (Don’t think you have any rights), a quote from Simone Weil.
- 6 Podcasts of the panel are available on the DSN website: <https://decolonizingsexualities.org/decolonialcafes>.
- 7 *Cracker* is a sarcastic term to designate a white person, especially of the popular class and in the US South. Its origins are many: *cracker* as in *cracking corn* because too poor to afford the mills; *whip cracker* as the foreman for the slave owner; or to invoke white biscuits in a way similar to the related expression “white bread.”
- 8 I am grateful to Donatella D’Angelo and Paolo Guera for multiple conversations on the drag queen readings in March and April 2020.