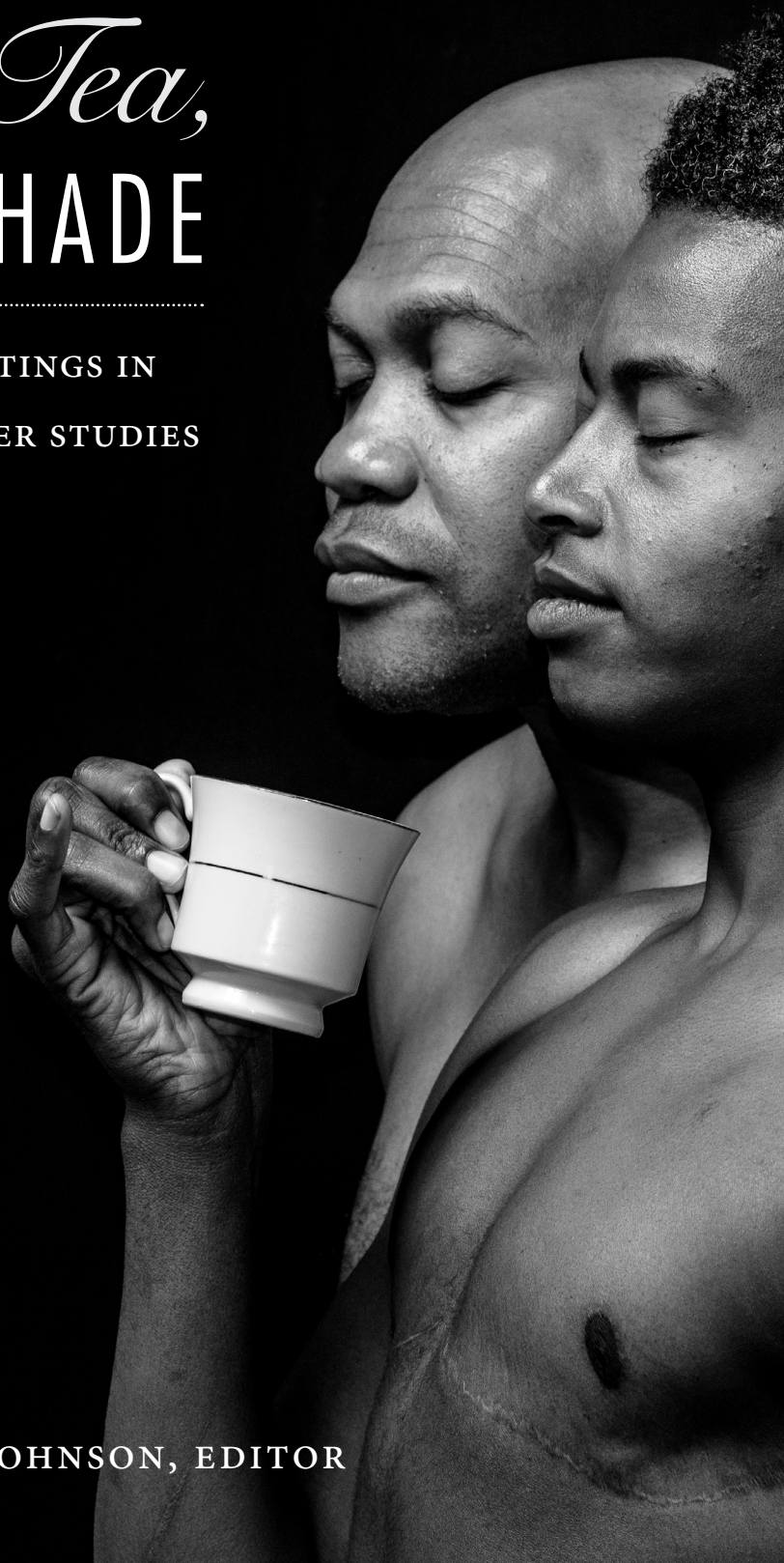


# *No Tea,* NO SHADE

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NEW WRITINGS IN  
BLACK QUEER STUDIES



E. PATRICK JOHNSON, EDITOR

NO TEA, NO SHADE



*No Tea,*  
NO SHADE

New Writings in Black Queer Studies

EDITED BY

*E. Patrick Johnson*

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FOR ALL THE QUEER  
FOREMOTHERS AND FOREFATHERS



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## FOREWORD

*Cathy J. Cohen*



TO SAY THAT THE FIELD OF black queer studies has grown is undoubtedly an understatement. As E. Patrick Johnson notes in his introduction, it seems like only yesterday that many of us were struggling to have black LGBT folks included in discussions and articles about “the” black community. I remember helping to plan the conference Black Nations/Queer Nations in 1995 and never imagining that the future would include national and international conferences where black queer studies would be a central point of interrogation by scholars, activists, and politicians as was the case at the 2014 Whose Beloved Community?” conference held at Emory University. I remember attending the Black Queer Studies conference in 2000 planned by E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson and never believing that the group assembled there would in a decade help to revolutionize our study and understanding of black intimacy, sex, and community. And yet, here we are, the many of us, having built the academic field of black queer studies that has come to be respected, critiqued, and institutionalized.

It is the question of institutionalization and all that comes with it that currently worries me. Of course, the readers of a volume like *No Tea, No Shade* should be interested in seeing black queer studies incorporated into the mainstream of academic studies. Such institutionalization brings with it resources to train more students, jobs for those engaged in research in this field, tenure for those willing to risk their careers to push through boundaries of what was thought to be appropriate topics for scholars

studying black people, and the publication of our work across disciplines and sometimes outside the academy. The incorporation of black queer studies has the potential to transform some parts of the academy, especially African American and Gender and Women Studies. However, as we descend deeper into the ivory tower we must ask ourselves at what cost. To what degree does incorporation challenge our relevance to the same communities who find themselves at the heart of our research?

The question of relevance seems especially pertinent at this moment when a movement to declare the centrality of black lives and black communities continues to build across the country and the world. One of the defining characteristics of this movement is its insistence on reclaiming from the margins the bodies, leadership, and strength of those who have often been most peripheral in society and black communities. We are watching and hopefully participating in a movement that declares that its strategy is rooted in a black queer and feminist lens. This is a movement where black cis and trans women and men, those who are incarcerated, black immigrants, and poor black folk fighting for a living wage, are not only recognized as part of black communities, but are placed at the center of our struggles, our triumphs and our imagining of black subjectivity. This movement is the embodiment of what some of us have called a black queer nationalist politic—unapologetically black as the organization Black Youth Project (BYP100) declares, but also committed to a capacious understanding of how black communities get constituted at different historical times, in different parts of the world, and by different defining characteristics.

As I have contended before, the relevance of black queer studies is evidenced in the extraordinary and transformative work of scholars, like those highlighted in this volume, whose radical imagination insists on always recalibrating blackness, its embodiment and performance in an ever-changing political economy. Scholars of black queer studies find themselves both on the frontline of activism and informing frontline activist strategy by reminding all of us of the totality of black subjectivity. Through their work we are taught that while we must insist that black people not be the targets of state violence at the hands of the police, our demands for liberation must encompass our total humanity, including attention to the very human pursuits of pleasure, intimacy, and desire. Through their work we are reminded that the bodies and lives of black cis and trans women have just as routinely been the object of state abuse as our black brothers, including our death but also the regulation of our bodies

and behaviors through a rigid labor and welfare apparatus. Through their work we are shown how the state has used a plethora of ways to threaten the survival of black people, including police violence, but also the refusal of needed support such as the slow response to HIV/AIDS on the part of the state as it ravaged black communities in the early 1980s. Through their work we are told not only of the importance of the state as a site of interrogation but also that it does not encompass all the sites of power used against black people. Through their work we are taught that we must reject simple dichotomies of us versus them, highlighting instead the complexities of power that exist throughout society and in black communities, paying special attention to the collaborations between the state and black elites.

Thus, armed with these insights, the relevance of black queer studies also extends beyond the classroom into the streets, into movements and into the ways our folk creatively and defiantly build their families, communities, and relationships. Young people who have taken classes on black queer studies and black feminist theory through ethnic studies, African American studies and gender and sexuality departments are using the lessons taught in those classes to inform the organizing practices they are deploying on behalf of and in partnership with black people who may never see the inside of our classrooms. These young activists, who blend the politics of the academy and the politics of liberation, daily make black queer studies relevant to a changing world. They are the translators of academic and theoretical discourses looking for routes out of the ivory tower, searching to breathe new life into our stagnant constructions of who we are, what we do, and what we want. These young activists, fortified with the work of such authors as those in this volume, are breaking down the doors of structural racism and polite conversation, demanding that all the contours of black life are not only protected but also embraced as we make space for a radical reimagining of how all the messy contours of black life matter.

So as we read the incredible work in this volume from a new generation of black queer studies scholars, we must remember that the world in which we receive this volume is a world at war (again) over whether black lives matter; whether black desire, especially that perceived as outside the bounds of some imposed respectable perimeter, can be pursued; whether black cis and trans women can both lead movements against and be the recognized targets of state violence; and whether the institutionalization of black queer studies means its irrelevance to black people struggling

for justice and freedom. Not one of these disputes has been resolved. We must, therefore, engage in battle on many fronts, struggling for the liberation of black people and as a consequence the liberation of our theories and research. The authors in this volume seem ready and able to take up such a challenge.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



AS I HAVE SAID ON MANY OCCASIONS, “edited volumes are so much work!” And I have always had to follow that up with, “and the final product is worth it.” I am so thankful to see this next iteration of black queer studies come to fruition, and that could not have happened without the brilliant next generation of scholars whose work is contained between these two covers. When I called, they responded with fierceness and genius. I thank all of you: Jafari S. Allen, Marlon M. Bailey, Zachary Blair, La Marr Jurelle Bruce, Jennifer DeClue, Treva Ellison, Lyndon K. Gill, Kai M. Green, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Kwame Holmes, Shaka McGlotten, Amber Jamilla Musser, Alison Reed, Ramón H. Rivera-Servera, Tanya L. Saunders, C. Riley Snorton, Kaila Adia Story, Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley, Julia Roxanne Wallace, and Kortney Ziegler. I trust that you will teach the next generation of children the way in which ze will grow!

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I'll never forget that breakfast at the American Studies Association conference in Puerto Rico when I pitched the idea for this book. Thanks for making it a reality.

And, as always, thanks to my life partner, Stephen J. Lewis, who is my ride or die. You always know how to give me just what I need when I need it.

# Introduction

E. PATRICK JOHNSON



BLACK QUEER STUDIES HAS COME OF AGE. Following on the heels of an explosion of conferences, articles, and books over the last decade, black sexuality studies has been codified as a legitimate scholarly enterprise. While the Black Queer Studies in the Millennium Conference held at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2000 was a watershed moment, I do not believe anyone in attendance imagined that black queer studies would proliferate the way that it has since the turn of the twenty-first century. But as John D’Emilio has observed about the 1990s as regards gay liberation, the “world turned” in relation to the study of black sexuality between 2000 and 2005.<sup>1</sup> Bookended by the Black Queer Studies conference in 2000 and the publication of Mae G. Henderson’s and my edited volume, *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology (BQS)*, in 2005 was the publication of Roderick Ferguson’s *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* in 2003, which inaugurated yet another queer (of color) analytic and complemented very nicely the work in *BQS*, to which Ferguson also contributed an essay.

The years since 2005 have shifted the ground upon which we theorize blackness and sexuality, most notably because a whole new crop of scholars took up the mantle and ran with it. Although some of them were exposed to black queer studies through *BQS*, a few of them were actually graduate and undergraduate students who attended the Black Queer

Studies conference and are now newly minted PhDs, assistant professors, or recently tenured associate professors. These scholars had the benefit of coming of age in the academy during the emergence of queer studies and cultural studies and thus were invested in generating knowledge in these areas, but with race as a central concern. In their home departments, however, they were hard-pressed to find support for their research and were often discouraged from pursuing topics that focused too heavily on sexuality. What the conference and the scholarship that emerged thereafter did, then, was not only legitimize their research interests but also provide them with role models in the field to whom they could look for support. Most often—and perhaps more important—that support came in the way of new progenitors of black queer studies evaluating the work of these emergent scholars, clearing a path for them to do the work as well as legitimizing it to colleagues in discussions of hiring and through the tenure process.

The black queer “children” who came of age during the burgeoning stages of black queer studies also learned from the lessons of their foremothers and forefathers and avoided many (but not all) of the theoretical missteps their predecessors made, while also generating their own theorizations of racial queerness with a critical difference.<sup>2</sup> And while these junior scholars critically engage and critique the work of senior scholars, they do so respectfully and with a sense of deference, but with no less rigor or candor. Thus, the title of this volume, *No Tea, No Shade*, stems from the contemporary black vernacular phrase made popular by millennial black queer blogger Qaadir Howard (also known as “Timiya”) on his YouTube series and then taken up in black queer popular culture by drag performer RuPaul to indicate, “I mean no offense by what I’m about to say, but I need to speak the truth.” Or, in other words, “to keep it real.” The ingenuity of imbricating two “old school” black queer vernacular terms—“tea” (gossip) and “shade” (disrespect)—is apropos of how today’s black queer scholars build upon the theorizations that preceded their own. In this way, new black queer studies scholars embody the signifyin(g) tradition of African American arts and criticism—that of repetition and revision with a critical difference.<sup>3</sup>

In the introduction to *Black Queer Studies*, Mae G. Henderson and I state the aims of that volume as wanting to stage “a critical intervention in the discourses of black studies and queer studies” by creating a space for more discussion of sexuality within black studies and of race in queer studies.<sup>4</sup> While the essays in that volume do stage such interventions and

discussions, they do so in the context of having to shoulder the burden of what is left out because the anthology was one of the first of its kind in the field. Anticipating this lack, Henderson and I tried to preempt one of the critiques: the absence of diasporic voices, save for the one essay by Rinaldo Walcott in which he encourages a “diaspora reading practice.”<sup>5</sup> As with any body of work that emerges in a new field of study, there are always going to be blind spots and limitations, despite every effort to avoid them. While some may indeed find silences and absences in the essays in *No Tea, No Shade*, by and large they are not the same ones of a previous generation. More than a few of the essays, for example, look beyond U.S. borders to theorize black queer subjectivity not separate from, but in relation to U.S. blackness and queerness.<sup>6</sup>

Much of this more expansive research focus is due in part to the historical context in which these scholars came of age—both chronologically and intellectually. John D’Emilio points out that the riots at the Stonewall Rebellion of 1969, while holding mythic status as the turning point in the gay liberation movement, were barely noticed by most of the country and did not result in wide sweeping policy change. He believes that Stonewall marked the “potential” of changes still to come. The 1990s, he argues, saw the symbolism of Stonewall manifest in material gains for queers in the areas of representation (for example, print, television, and film media), same-sex corporate benefits, and local-government-designated “gayborhoods,” to name a few tangible examples.<sup>7</sup> In some ways, the authors in *No Tea, No Shade* experienced these advances and more, given the demise of “don’t ask, don’t tell”; the shift of support for and legalization of same-sex marriage; the striking down of the Defense of Marriage Act; the election of the United States’ first black president, who also supports LGBT concerns; miraculous advances in treatment for HIV/AIDS; professional athletes identifying as queer; and transgender people being more visible and accepted. These cultural and societal shifts in beliefs and values about queers, in addition to the policy changes enacted, in no small way affected the kinds of topics and theoretical directions that these new scholars now almost take for granted as objects and areas of inquiry.

The academy itself has also changed over the past fifteen years. In 2000, when the Black Queer Studies conference occurred, those of us doing work on black sexuality were doing so in traditional disciplines and over and against the will of some of our department chairs and colleagues. Only a handful of the presenters were housed in gender and women’s studies and fewer still in African American studies. Queer theory/studies had

been legitimized in the humanities and some social science fields such as anthropology and sociology; still, there were few teaching positions solely devoted to this area, let alone positions focused specifically on *black* queer studies. Over time, however, this has changed. During the past several years there have been positions advertised at elite private and large public institutions for scholars who focus explicitly on sexuality and even black sexuality.<sup>8</sup> While many of these positions have been in women's and gender studies departments and programs, some have been in African American studies programs and departments. In fact, in the newly formed Department of African and African Diaspora Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, there are six faculty who do work on black sexuality—two of whom have essays in this volume.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, a shift in the academy regarding sexuality studies manifested in a host of conferences that were interdisciplinary in nature and also had race as a central analytic optic of sexuality. These included the Race, Sex, Power conference hosted at the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2008, which brought together activists, artists, and scholars from around the country to focus on black and Latina/o sexuality; the Unleashing the Black Erotic: Gender and Sexuality—Passion, Power, and Praxis Conference hosted by the College of Charleston Avery Research Center and African American Studies in 2013; the Black Sexual Economies: Transforming Black Sexualities Research Conference in 2013 hosted by Washington University School of Law; and the Whose Beloved Community? Black Civil and LGBT Rights Conference held at Emory University in 2014, to name just a few. These conferences showcased a range of current scholarship in black queer studies and, in the case of the Whose Beloved Community? conference, policymakers and activists were integral to the list of presenters, including non-queer-identified legends such as the now deceased civil rights activist Julian Bond. In addition to the conferences, there have been several special issues of journals on black queer sexuality as well as coverage in academic professional periodicals such as the *Chronicle of Higher Education* about the increasing amount of scholarship produced in this area.<sup>10</sup> All of these professional and institutional shifts provide context for so many emerging new voices in the field.

But there is also a sense of daring in the current black queer scholarship that takes a different tack than earlier work. No tea, no shade, but unlike some of us black queer scholars who were part of the first “wave” of black queer studies, the current children's work, to a degree, is not bound by the same institutional, disciplinary, and publishing politics. They are not, for instance, concerned as much with “intervening” in (white) queer

studies as much as they are in pursuing their own agenda despite what is going on in “traditional” queer theory and as if race and class always already matters. There are no manifestos or battle cries; there is just the work. This is not to suggest that these scholars are apolitical or naïve about what is at stake with their work or in the world around them. Quite the contrary. They simply do not allow the negative discursive and material terrain that is the academy to compel a response. Many of this new generation of intellectuals are also grassroots activists, community organizers, and community leaders, and they traverse quite easily between the front porch and the lectern as they embrace the ever-increasing need to speak to multiple audiences. Their scholarship is the fruit of the old heads’ labor of beating back the brush, clearing the land for a new crop to grow. Indeed, more than a few of the essays in this volume employ the work of scholars from the *BQS* volume, such as Cathy Cohen, Charles Nero, Rinaldo Walcott, and myself. They also rethink or reconsider even canonical black queer figures like Audre Lorde and Barbara Smith while practicing those same writers’ grassroots activism. The contributors to *No Tea, No Shade* are conscious of the struggles of their forebears—both those in the distant past and those still actively producing scholarship—while also acknowledging that their struggles and interests are not exactly the same. Sankofa-like, the new black queer studies pays homage to the past so that it can propel the field forward. I can locate three areas of interest that the current generation of black queer scholars has taken up that build upon or signify on the work that has come before: social media, pornography/explicit sex, and black feminism as queer theory. Below, I want to provide a few examples of the new work in these areas.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, social media forms such as Myspace and Facebook were not in existence. And, while the BlackBerry mobile device was around, it was not as sophisticated as the contemporary smartphone (that is, iPhone and Android) with apps like Grindr, Jack’d, iDate, Scruff, and Guy Spy, which provide virtual sites for LGBT folks to find one another, build community, network, and hook up. Indeed, technology has evolved so quickly that it has had an enormous impact on the ways queers enact desire. The racial and class implications of these virtual forms index long-standing discourses that position the raced and working-class body as other and the white middle- and upper-class body as idyllic. Black queer theorists of today understand this phenomenon in ways that those of an earlier generation could not because, to a large degree, their everyday existence has been shaped by the forces of social

media, including their sexuality. In his book *Virtual Intimacies: Media, Affect, and Queer Sociality*, Shaka McGlotten, one of the contributors to this volume, takes up the question of how cyberspace has altered our notions of intimacy and how “the particularities of our [black and Latino gay men] racial enfleshments have operated as obvious and not so obvious drags on our erotic or romantic possibilities.”<sup>11</sup> Trained as an anthropologist, McGlotten draws on ethnographic field research to engage black and Latino gay men (including himself) about the ways in which they theorize their own sexual pleasure, desire, and heartbreak through their engagement with social media across various platforms. The temporal and spatial arrangements of these platforms are quite different from the ones that Dwight A. McBride theorizes about in his landmark essay on the “gay marketplace of desire” in which he describes the implications of the transition from gay personal print ads to online chat rooms as a watershed moment because of the ways in which it simultaneously simplified and further privatized the placing of ads.<sup>12</sup>

No tea, no shade, but in today’s gay marketplace of desire, with an app like Grindr, one does not have to go through the trouble of placing an ad and waiting for a response, or even go through the trouble of entering a chat room; rather, all one need do is open the app, peruse pictures, and see who is closest. Hooking up has never been so easy—except that it is complicated by the same racial and class profiling that occurs in nonvirtual spaces. In many ways, McGlotten engages the same questions as McBride in terms of how sexual desire is always already a product of cultural and social conditioning, which, in this country, always means the long shadow of white supremacy. On the other hand, what is unique about McGlotten’s approach within the context of black queer studies is that it employs social scientific methods like ethnography to engage theoretical discourses that typically circulate in the humanities, such as affect theory, media studies, and cultural studies. While interdisciplinarity is far from new in black queer studies, the particular employment of these methods and theories exemplifies the ways in which black queer theorists today maneuver within various fields, often deepening the work that preceded it. In the case of McGlotten, his is the first wholesale study of contemporary social media forms and their impact on the affective economy of black queer desire.

The technological advances that have occurred in social media have also affected the ways in which black queers engage in sex and represent it. Sites such as XTube.com, Black2ube.com, blacklesbianfuck.com,

sweetblacklesbians.com, and others, where everyday people post self-made videos of themselves engaged in a whole range of sex acts, have made pornography more accessible to consume for those who cannot afford to rent, buy, or download it. Thus, the broader dissemination and accessibility of black queer porn has, in some ways, made discussions of explicit black queer sex less taboo or less “shocking” than, say, when a book like *Gary in Your Pocket*, a collection of poems, diary entries, and stories by black gay writer Gary Fisher, who died of AIDS in 1993, and edited by the late Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, was published—especially in academic circles. Fisher’s candid depictions of bondage, dominance, sadism, and masochism (BDSM) with (mostly) white men from his life in San Francisco and North Carolina were challenging for even the most progressive queer theorists during the 1990s. In one passage he writes: “I hadn’t seen his cock, didn’t know it would be so big, so unmanageable—hadn’t I always wanted to die this way? He pushed toward my throat, curled me tighter, and drove my head down on it, still talking about death like it was our only alternative. Maybe I understood this mechanism, I’d become the middle of, understood its strength, its unrelenting, its selfishness and selflessness. I tasted his salt, his ooze, and my throat jumped, but I could not dislodge him.”<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps it was the currency of the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS that made Fisher’s writing so difficult to read, or perhaps it was the sense of nihilism that seemed to haunt his personal accounts; whatever the case, Fisher’s work emboldens black queer theorist Robert Reid-Pharr five years later to open the introduction of his book *Black Gay Man* with a description of his white then-lover coming on his face—a scene evocative of Fisher’s writing: “When he comes, usually standing over me, jerking hard at his dick and making those strange moon faces, the liquid spills out almost like accident. He drawls, ‘Goddamn, Goddamn,’ as the goo hits my skin.”<sup>14</sup> It is a passage that leads Dwight A. McBride to clutch his pearls, “put the book down and call a friend,” but then later, in a self-reflexive moment, recognize that Fisher’s and Reid-Pharr’s provocation was more about tapping into potential readers’ investments of propriety, self-censorship, and (black) respectability. McBride acknowledges: “Nothing that Reid-Pharr or Fisher had said in either instance was news to me. Nothing that they had described was thought of, lived, or talked about openly with close gay friends and confidants. I allowed myself to be shocked by the public nature of these declarations, the fact that they were out there in the world. They did not ascribe to the ‘positive’ representation of black life, or of black



gay life, that we have been so thoroughly programmed to respect, revere, and, as critics and commentators, to produce.”<sup>15</sup>

In his self-reflection, McBride, one of the progenitors of black queer studies, indexes the hold that black respectability politics had on many of us doing work early on in this field of study. I do not want to suggest here that every writer or critic working on black queer sexuality before the publication of *Gary in Your Pocket* censored their creative or critical work in deference to a politics of black respectability. Certainly, such black writers and critics as Bruce Nugent during the Harlem Renaissance, James Baldwin in the 1950s and 1960s, Samuel Delany in the 1960s and 1970s, and Cheryl Clarke, Marlon Riggs, Essex Hemphill, and a host of others in the 1980s were describing black queer sex in explicit terms. What is notable here, however, is that most of this work was in the realm of fiction or poetry and was published by trade presses. Yes, the “shock” of *Gary in Your Pocket* was the representation of the racialization of erotic power in explicit terms, but it was also the fact that a university press published it. Thus, what I am suggesting, as McBride does, is that for those of us who did work early on in black queer studies, especially as it became codified in the academy as a legitimate field of inquiry, the protocols and limits of what we thought would be acceptable academic discourse was always already bounded by the traditional training we received in our respective fields and graduate programs. Being provocative within certain boundaries was acceptable, but that boundary shrunk and increased based on the venue of the publication, the institution where one was located, and the particular setting. Describing explicit sex acts—let alone one’s own—was, and for some of my generation and earlier still is, taboo within the realm of academic writing and presentation. Indeed, I recount these earlier instances of provocative writing and the anxiety about its production to note how many current black queer studies scholars do not think twice about critically engaging and presenting explicit descriptions of taboo black queer sex—others or their own.

Regarding explicit sex acts and their depictions, I call on the example of Marlon Bailey’s work, whose essay in this volume takes up “raw sex,” “barebacking,” or same-sex sex without the use of a condom. In his paper, “What I’m Told, What I Want, What I Do,” delivered at the 2014 Whose Beloved Community? conference, Bailey chronicles the story of “Raheim,” a black queer man who attends a sex party where only raw sex is allowed. Bailey performatively renders Raheim’s sexual encounter with-

out any self-consciousness, even enjoying the retelling of his interlocutor's story as the audience listens intently:

After Raheim takes off all of his clothes, places them into a paper bag (with his handle written on it), and gives it to a guy working the party, he enters the dark back room. As soon as he enters he smells a mixture of sweat and cologne. He sees a king size bed with dudes getting fucked all over it, some doggy style, up against the wall, and others on their backs on the bed, in every corner of the room. Everybody's fucking raw, and he neither sees nor feels condom packages on the floor. A dude comes up to Raheim, bends down [in] front of him and puts his dick in his mouth and starts to suck it until it gets hard. Then he turns around and claims a corner of the bed. He bends over and toots his ass up, signaling to Raheim to enter him raw. Soon after Raheim starts to fuck him, the guy's ass is so tight and hot that after a few pumps, Raheim feels like he is about to bust, "You gon let me cum in this booty . . . huh[?] . . . You gon let me cum in this booty?" The guy moans and starts breathing really hard, as his thighs begin to shake intensely, "Yea bust that nut nigga; give me them kids."<sup>16</sup>

I must say that as an old-school mother,<sup>17</sup> I did clutch my pearls a time or two during Bailey's presentation at the explicit nature of Raheim's adventures. The rest of the audience, who were mostly of a younger generation, however, engaged in an almost call-and-response to Bailey, as they snapped their fingers and responded verbally to his erotic performance. Harkening back to Fisher and Reid-Pharr, one might assume that this representation of black queer sex within an academic setting would be shocking, not so much because of the language used to describe the sex acts (although the language is explicitly provocative), but more so because of the *kind* of sex being narrated: unprotected same-gender sex. Given the scourge of HIV/AIDS on the black community, the notion of black people seeking out opportunities to engage in high-risk sex is indeed a hard nut to swallow (pun intended). But the point of Bailey's paper and the essay included in this volume is that desire is dangerous, and despite evidence to the contrary, some marginalized groups like black gay men are willing to take risks that might endanger their lives just so that they can experience intimacy—through touch, sweat, heat—in ways that they never experience living in white supremacist society that constantly rejects them. Indeed, Bailey's research casts a light on raw sex as a practice

among the black population that has been traditionally “shaded” by other (white) queer theorists doing work in this area, such as Tim Dean.<sup>18</sup> Similar to McGlotten, Bailey’s employment of ethnographic methods gives agency to these men that allows them to theorize “what they do” that rings true for a younger generation of scholars who did not come of age in the 1980s and 1990s and for whom HIV/AIDS is not a death sentence. The desire for intimate connections forces into the background prescriptions of safe sex and staves off the paranoia of infection so commonly articulated by black gay cultural workers such as poet Essex Hemphill when he writes in “Now We Think”: “Now we think/as we fuck/this nut/might kill us. There might be/a pin-sized hole/in the condom. /A lethal leak.”<sup>19</sup> In the raw sex community, there is no condom to contend with or think about having a “lethal leak,” providing no obstacle between one’s enfolded fulfillments. Analogous to the condomless sex is the disavowal of respectability politics by the new black queer theorists who press forward with wild abandon, unencumbered by any sense of propriety or deference to “proper” academic discourse or, for that matter, sexual practice.<sup>20</sup> Importantly, academic book publishing has changed with the times as well. Explicit sexual language in the context of an academic book is one thing, but explicit images is quite another. In 2014 alone, Duke University Press published two books on black porn by black feminist/queer studies scholars, replete with not only explicit language but also multiple images of explicit sex acts: cum shots, fellatio, anal penetration, and so forth.<sup>21</sup> I could not even imagine this ten years ago.

Regarding taboo sex, deceased black queer critic Vincent Woodard takes on the topic of cannibalism and homoeroticism in his posthumously published text *The Delectable Negro: Human Consumption and Homoeroticism with U.S. Slave Culture*, in which he provocatively recounts how whites literally and metaphorically consumed black flesh—a consumption that was almost always undergirded by an erotic charge. He also describes “the hungry nigger,” a trope through which he theorizes the interior lives of the enslaved black male, which entailed a hunger for selfhood, intimacy, and belonging. Further developing this line of argument, Woodard links this particular hunger to homoeroticism by “theorizing the black male orifice”—namely, the mouth and anus—as a site of particular importance in the history and genealogy of the black experience that might “hint at the range of interpretive implications of black male hunger, with hunger serving as metonymy for needing, wanting, being made to taste, lack, and the taboo desire to be filled.”<sup>22</sup> The provocation of Woodard’s theorization of

black male hunger under slavery is remarkable when one considers the implications of the psychosexual dynamic he describes between master and slave, but one, nonetheless, Woodard advances with confidence and a heaping of archival evidence.<sup>23</sup>

This does not mean, however, that there has not been resistance from senior scholars—particular those housed in African American studies—who see this new direction as troubling and a distraction from race as the primary category of analysis. Indeed, in *A Taste for Brown Sugar: Black Women in Pornography*, her book on black women in the pornography industry, Mireille Miller-Young recounts how senior black feminists called her a “pervert” and “pornographer” “not only for writing about the history of black women’s images, performances, and sex work in pornography, but for showing images from this history in various presentation formats.”<sup>24</sup> Oh, the shade of it all. Nonetheless, the old guard’s power to silence this research is waning as this new generation of scholars demonstrates its ability to showcase its knowledge of traditional scholarship *and* the most current theory. It really is the case that the new black queer theorists are honoring their forebears through a critical praxis made possible by those forebears yet are not bound by the same protocols of presentation or areas of research.

Another arena in which this phenomenon plays itself out is within what I call the centering of the black female subject within black queer studies. In *The Erotic Life of Racism*, black lesbian feminist theorist Sharon Patricia Holland surveys the history of some of the most pressing debates in critical race theory and their relationship to feminist theory and queer studies. She offers a theoretical meditation on the insidious and banal nature of racism, or what she refers to as “racial practice,” to account for the ways in which it cannot be disaggregated from the erotic. Throughout this meditation she indexes a number of “anxieties” around race relative to the black (female) body in feminism, queer studies, and subsequently black queer studies. Holland uses, by way of example, the by-now-classic essay “Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality,” by Evelyn Hammonds, in which she laments the historical absence of the black female subject within (white) feminism and her dubiousness about the turn to queer theory as a site of hailing the black female body.<sup>25</sup> Holland contends that the questions that Hammonds raises within queer studies “remain unanswered despite the emergence of black queer studies, queer of color critique, and most recently, the discourse of settler colonialism brought by native studies scholars.”<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, I want to point to the

closing lines of Hammonds's essay to make a case for how indeed the new black queer studies scholars position the black female body as central. Hammonds closes with the following: "Finally, my search for black women's sexuality through queer theory has taught me that I need not simply add the label of queer to my list as another naturalized identity. As I have argued, there is no need to reproduce black women's sexualities as a silent void. Nor are black queer female sexualities simply identities. Rather, they represent discursive and material terrains where there exists the *possibility* for the active production of speech, desire, and agency."<sup>27</sup> While standing by her claims about queer theory being suspect for an analysis of the black female subject, Hammonds's last line actually opens up the "possibility" for a way to instantiate black female sexuality and, I would argue, within black queer studies. This is exemplified in the work of several contemporary black queer/feminist theorists who, through the theoretical tools of black feminist and black queer studies, produce work that focuses solely on the black female voice, desires (sexual or otherwise), and the ways in which she has agency over her own life and representation. These theorists include Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley (included in this volume), LaMonda H. Stallings, and Matt Richardson, among others. If, as Hortense Spillers has rightfully argued, "black women are the beached whales of the sexual universe, unvoiced, misseen, not doing, awaiting *their* verb," then these scholars have, in part, rescued the whale, pushed her back into the sea, unsilenced her, and given the whale her due.<sup>28</sup>

What I appreciate most about these particular theorists' work (and I thought I would never highly value the trait I am about to attribute to them!) is its sense of entitlement. That is, it already assumes that black women's sexuality is worthy of study; it assumes that race and gender are legitimate analytic tools; it proceeds as if it has nothing to prove to white feminists (queer identified or not) or black straight feminists. These scholars simply go about "the active production of speech, desire, and agency."

LaMonda H. Stallings's *Mutha' Is Half a Word* was the first of these books to be published of the three I mention here and employs folklore studies to engage the ways in which black women function as trickster figures in black culture. Disavowing the masculinist trickster figures in African American folklore such as "Brer Rabbit," "the Signifying Monkey," or "Stag-o-lee," Stallings expands the trickster trope to account for "the uncensoring of Black women who laugh out loud, curse, sit with their legs open, and selfishly act on their desires" and "the constructions of Black female subjectivities cognizant of autonomous sexual desires."<sup>29</sup>

She draws on the tradition of “trickster-trope,” which emphasizes indeterminacy, unpredictability, and fluidity—traits associated with queer—to argue how black women embody difference within difference to enact agency over their sexuality. Ultimately, Stallings queers black feminist theory and criticism by redirecting its focus on the “rhetoric of sex” to a more libidinal focus on black female desire—and all through the optic of black queer studies.

Another example of this centering of the black female within black queer studies (as well as a focus on diaspora) is Omise'êke Natasha Tinsley's *Thieving Sugar: Eroticism between Women in Caribbean Literature*. Drawing on the history of black subjugation to cite the vexed expression of same-sex desire, Tinsley turns to etymology and social linguistics to discern how the remains of the discursive and material relations between enslaved Africans during the Middle Passage provided an alternative sexual epistemology for the Caribbean—one that disavows the “closet” as an apt sexual metaphor in favor of a culture-specific nomenclature grounded in the material labor of the black (female) body and its relation to land and ocean. Making connections among sugar production in the Caribbean, the paradoxical “ungendering” of black female slaves that makes their sexual selfhood possible, and the landscape of the “Global South,” Tinsley carefully demonstrates that the history of the black woman's body in the African Diaspora is shrouded not just in metaphor but also in the materiality of their own world-making. According to Tinsley, Caribbean women writers reappropriate the hegemonic metaphors of land and sea deployed to justify Afro-Caribbean women's subjugation and redeploy them to provide a clearing for these same women to have “an imagination of emancipation.” The places these women imagine evoke homoeroticism, not in the Eurocentric constructions and theorizations of that term, but rather in those embedded in the social linguistics of Caribbean cultural history.

And, more recently, Matt Richardson's *The Queer Limit of Black Memory: Black Lesbian Literature and Irresolution* unearths an underutilized archive of black lesbian literature to highlight the queerness of the black diaspora. This book contests the notion that there is no archive of black lesbian art and fiction. Drawing on U.S. and British black women's fiction, Richardson argues that these queer writers' work not only exemplifies an archive but also rewrites the history of black letters. Part of the uniqueness of this research is the examination of contemporary black lesbian texts that have heretofore never been analyzed, such as Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*, Cherry Muhanji's *Her*, Jewelle Gomez's “Louisiana, 1850,” LaShonda Barnett's

"Miss Hannah's Lesson," and SDiane Adamz Bogus's "The Champagne Lady." These texts all revise history by instantiating the black lesbian subject over and against what Richardson calls "disremembering," or the process by which black lesbian subjects are deliberately forgotten or "un-mourned" in the recounting of black cultural history. In a similar vein to Toni Morrison's argument that the white literary canon is always haunted by a black presence, Richardson's text represents a major intervention in African American literary and feminist studies by suggesting that there has always already been a black queer lesbian presence in the black literary canon.<sup>30</sup> Richardson's work is apropos as he argues that "historically, black has been inextricably tied to the queer—the lesbian in particular."<sup>31</sup>

In addition to these three emergent areas in black queer studies, there is yet another nascent area of research on black transgender subjects emerging. Although, as of this writing, there is still no manuscript-length study on black transgender people, there exists a feature documentary film titled *Still Black* (2008), by trans filmmaker, scholar, and activist Kortney Ziegler (who has an essay in this volume); a number of articles, including Enoch H. Page and Matt Richardson's "On the Fear of Small Numbers"; as well as a number of self-identified black transgender or gender-variant scholars.<sup>32</sup> Despite the increased visibility of black trans scholars, their work does not necessarily focus on transgender research. More frequently, they are producing work on gender nonconformity and/or gender variance, including two essays in this volume. Nonetheless, there is a clear sign that black transgender studies is taking hold as a legitimate form of critical analysis in the academy.

Of course, there are numerous other new areas of inquiry in black queer studies since the publication of *Black Queer Studies*, and even more so in the social sciences. The point I am trying to make here, however, is that the promise upon which Mae G. Henderson and I (and the contributors in that volume) hedged our bets has been fulfilled.

*No Tea, No Shade* comprises nineteen essays from a variety of disciplines, including African American studies, American studies, anthropology, sociology, film studies, history, literary studies, performance studies, and urban studies, though most of the scholars are decidedly interdisciplinary. Apropos of the authors' background, I chose not to cluster the essays under thematic headings but rather to let each essay stand on its own—although the proximity of some essays to each other was inspired by some overlap in method or theme.



The volume opens with Jafari S. Allen's "Black/Queer Rhizomatics: Train Up a Child in the Way Ze Should Grow . . ." Inspired by botany and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's notion of the "rhizome/rhizomatic," which moves beyond tradition and history and emphasizes the creative, promiscuous, underground, multiple, and sometimes contradictory, Allen proposes "black/queer rhizomes." The rhizome (*rhízōma* [Greek], "mass of roots") is the mode of propagation and sustenance for plants as diverse as bamboo, bunch grasses, ginger, irises, and orchids. It sends out roots and shoots from its nodes. Allen's meditation draws on this trope to read closely the important nodes of the recent past and the present moment to theorize a "new and more possible meeting" of our artists, activists, scholars, policymakers, and intellectuals. The essay simultaneously avows and disavows "same gender loving," "LGBT," "queer," and "DL" discourses in the United States and various local names and concepts used to (self) identify nonheteronormative individuals of Africa(n descent) in various other parts of the world, such that we can become "fluent in each other's histories" and conversant in others' imaginations. Given the "progress" of black queer life, Allen ultimately asks, what are the conditions of possibility for beautiful and transformative work today? Where should we look for inspiration, and to whom are we accountable? Who is this "we," anyway?

The critiques of (white) queer studies continue today but take a more nuanced approach as witnessed in Alison Reed's provocative essay, "The Whiter the Bread, the Quicker You're Dead: Spectacular Absence and Post-Racialized Blackness in (White) Queer Theory." Drawing on James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* as a jumping-off point, Reed engages the neoliberal bent in queer studies by highlighting the ways in which it unwittingly deploys racialized bodies as "spectacular markers of queer-ness," the practice of employing race as theoretical fetish. Through what she identifies as a conflation of race and racism, Reed argues that (white) queer theory often undermines the eradication of institutionalized racism and, instead, buttresses the very oppressive structures it purports to undermine through its co-optation of civil rights strategies, discourses, and theories. Ultimately, Reed suggests (white) queer theory must rethink the ways in which it engages race such that it avoids redoubling the erasure of race and systemic racism for which it has been critiqued since its inception.

From discussions of queer theorizing writ large, we move to the formation of an alternative to queer as an organizing analytic and turn to Trans\*. In his "Troubling the Waters: Mobilizing a Trans\* Analytic," Kai



M. Green stages a conversation between black lesbian feminism and transgender studies. Through a series of close readings of editorials by Alycee Lane that appeared in *Black Lace*, a black lesbian erotic magazine, he demonstrates how black lesbian as a Trans\* modifier of feminism indexes the contradiction of (white) feminist exclusion of black women, while simultaneously forging a space for the expansion of the category “woman.” Through a Trans\* reading of black lesbian feminist texts, Green demonstrates how this expansion of the category “woman” allows for potential trans subjectivity, sometimes named but often not.

We are introduced to more gender trouble in C. Riley Snorton’s essay, “Gender Trouble in *Triton*,” in which Snorton places Samuel R. Delany’s novel *Triton* in dialogue with contemporary debates in black, feminist, and trans scholarship to examine the utilities of heterotopias for making sense of racial and gender difference. As his reading of the novel bears out, heterotopias are not necessarily liberatory spaces, just as plurality and difference are not “good” in and of themselves. Thus gender’s troubles on *Triton* in the twenty-second century and some of the concerns with gender right now are not that gender is unable to proliferate; rather, the problem is that the techniques for normativizing gender so often shape one’s phenomenological experience of it. In this sense, both Delany’s novel and Judith Butler’s often-cited passage on drag in *Gender Trouble* suffer from similar forms of mischaracterization by equating gender electivity and performativity with freedom from (gender) identity.

In his introduction to a special issue of *Gay and Lesbian Quarterly* (GLQ), Jafari S. Allen argues that “black/queer/diaspora work emerges in a moment in which the terms *black*, *queer*, and *diaspora* . . . have already begun to be elaborated beyond the metaphors and concepts offered by any one of these constituencies, and beyond false dichotomies of essentialism and anti-essentialism.”<sup>33</sup> In the next four essays, the authors provide evidence of this “current conjuncture” through their methods and objects of study and by marking black queer theory’s wade into Caribbean waters. First stop, Puerto Rico. In “Reggaetón’s Crossings: Black Aesthetics, Latina Nightlife, and Queer Choreography,” Ramón H. Rivera-Servera takes on the dismissal of *perreo*, the doggy-style dance that anchors reggaetón choreography, in contemporary Puerto Rican feminist criticism to emphasize the feminist and queer microagencies performed by dancers who engage with this musical culture. Through examining Carolina Caycedo’s video documentary of a *perreo* dancing marathon in Rincón, Puerto Rico, and ethnographic data from a Latina/o queer dance club

in Phoenix, Arizona, Rivera-Servera argues that the black aesthetics of reggaetón enabled queer dance practices that exceeded the heteropatriarchal politico-economic and representational frameworks of reggaetón. In offering the on-the-ground analytic of performance as an optic, the essay features the dance skills of reggaetoneras and their understanding of the racial economies of reggaetón as queer engagements, perhaps even interventions, with the gender politics of the genre.

From Puerto Rico, we head to Jamaica to engage music and theater. Lyndon Gill's essay, "I Represent Freedom: Diaspora and the Meta-Queerness of Dub Theater," engages the life and work of black queer Jamaican Canadian storyteller, playwright, and actor d'bi.young, who currently resides in Cape Town, South Africa, as a way into reading the radical queerness of one of her seemingly least queer plays. Gill first provides a brief history and genealogy of the dub music genre, an aural aesthetic birthed in late 1960s Jamaica, followed by the history of the moment in the late 1970s to early 1980s when Jamaican poets in Kingston and London first began to distill the sound principles of the relatively new music genre into "dub poetry." He then analyzes what he refers to as "the queer middle child" of d'bi.young's three-part dub theater *sankofa trilogy*, *benu*, which has no LGBT characters. Though d'bi.young openly and courageously identifies as queer, Gill argues that she actively refuses static categories of sexual orientation, especially if they are based on parochial presumptions about sex/gender transparency and stability, which invites us to expand the boundaries of queer recognition.

Staying with the Caribbean flows of queerness is Omise'êke Natasha Tinsley's "To Transcender Transgender: Choreographies of Gender Fluidity in the Performances of MilDred Gerestant." Tinsley analyzes the 1990s Haitian American performance artist MilDred Gerestant, who ascended to fame in the drag king scene, dressing, dancing, and dragging as a smooth mackdaddy who played with and subverted stereotypes of African American masculinity. Her recent performance work, however, moves her musical citations from hip hop to Haitian Vodou: "DanceHaitianGender" and "Transcender," both of which draw on Afro-Caribbean ritual, and particularly on the Haitian lwas (divinities) Danbala, Baron Samedi, and Ezili, to meditate on culturally specific imaginations of gender fluidity. Her performances integrate masculine and feminine variations of these lwas in order to creatively embody the limits of global northern vocabularies of "transgender," suggesting an alternative in *transcender*—that is, in engagement with the submerged Caribbean epistemology of syncretic

religions. Tinsley offers a close reading of “I Transcender,” exploring how and why Gerestant turns to Vodou not merely as a religious practice but also as an epistemology, as the only way of knowing gender and sexuality sufficiently complex enough to choreograph the racialized and classed genders that Haitians negotiate at home and in diaspora.

Bridging the Caribbean with South America, Tanya Saunders engages the black queer world-making among lesbians in Cuba and Brazil. Drawing on her experience as touring manager for a lesbian hip hop group, Saunders uses ethnographic methods to engage the ways in which black lesbians in the diaspora mobilize hip hop as a site of feminist activism. Beyond expanding the literature on queers in Cuba and Brazil—and women in particular—Saunders disavows the common logic that women and queers are invisible within hip hop. Indeed, she argues that these queer women actively integrate their African heritage, queerness, and artistry in a context where the explicit celebration of such imbricated identities—especially in Cuba and Brazil—is not the norm. Ultimately, Saunders believes that these women’s artistic and activist employment of hip hop offers a different understanding of subject formation in the African diaspora.

Drag performance has always been a sign of gender play and variance but has, nonetheless, been a site of much debate about trafficking in misogyny and heteronormativity and, more recently, racist representation. In “The Body Beautiful: Black Drag, American Cinema, and the Heteroperpetually Ever After,” La Marr Jurelle Bruce focuses on three films—*To Wong Foo, Romeo + Juliet*, and *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*—that feature black drag queens that serve a particular use value within the rhetorical mise-en-scène of each film’s racial, sexual, and gender politics. Theorizing the concept of “heteroperpetuity,” a hegemonic form of heteronormative power that operates insidiously within the structures of American cinema, Bruce argues that the figure of the black drag queen actually potentially disrupts heteroperpetuity’s power through “her” spectacular queerness and blackness.

Shifting from cisgender males’ gender play to cisgender women performing masculinity, Kortney Ziegler moves between the distant archive of the Harlem Renaissance to the less distant period of the 1960s to rethink the notion of the “black sissy.” In “Black Sissy Masculinity and the Politics of Dis-respectability,” Ziegler examines the Harlem Renaissance performance artist Gladys Bentley and the ways in which her manipulations of gender suggest a type of kinky politics that offers a new space of black queer possibility. Specifically, he asserts that Bentley’s appropriation

of a fetishized image of black masculinity conjures up notions of “sissy play”—a type of BDSM role play where a male pleurably embodies hyperfeminine attributes in order to offset his masculinity. Although Bentley did not identify as male, Ziegler interprets her work with the knowledge that black women have always been perceived as innately masculine due to competing discourses of white racism and black respectability politics, ultimately framing them within narratives of strength. He reads Bentley’s instances of cross-dressing and vocal play as representative of a “black sissy” aesthetic that makes legible the interrelation of black queer and “normative sexualities,” while transforming dominant notions of black female sexuality and gender.

In “Let’s Play: Exploring Cinematic Black Lesbian Fantasy, Pleasure, and Pain,” Jennifer DeClue takes up Juana María Rodríguez’s challenge to embrace the pleasure of “untamed erotics” and not shy away from exploring the materiality of sexuality and the problematics of sex play and fantasy among racialized subjectivities. In so doing, DeClue examines three films that feature black lesbian fantasy, BDSM play, and sexual pleasure. She focuses on the tensions engendered by visualizing black lesbian sex acts, given the history of black women’s sexual exploitation, and the *politics of silence* as well as the *culture of dissemblance* used to combat degradation. The essay also examines the manner in which sexual fantasy and play works out traumas of racialized sexual violence while leaving open the possibility that these cinematic representations of lesbian sexuality may traumatize as they work to disencumber the politics of visibility and silence that always already haunt black women’s sexuality.

As discussed earlier, digital media and cyberspace has had an increasing impact on black queer sexual agency, desire, and representation. Combined with the discourses that circulate in HIV/AIDS prevention—especially from official agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—virtuality becomes a complex “web” of contradictions when it comes to black queer sexuality and sexual health. The next two essays engage these questions. In “Black Gay (Raw) Sex,” Marlon M. Bailey theorizes high-risk sexual behavior in black gay communities. Drawing on interviews and analyses of black gay men’s profiles on gay sex websites, he demonstrates how HIV/AIDS prevention discourses and institutions’ epidemiological surveillance of unprotected sex among black gay men actually works against their aim to stop the spread of infection because it fails to encompass black gay male sexual pleasure and desire. Arguing for a move beyond a reductive causal relationship between sexual behavior

and contagion that buttresses the pathologization and surveillance of black queer sexuality, Bailey calls for a reconceptualization of prevention methods and discourse in health care that would take into account the multiple factors that account for the sexual behavior of black gay men, including the need and desire for intimacy. Given the day-to-day struggles within structures of systemic racism, classism, and homophobia, black queer men, Bailey suggests, are always already “at risk”; unprotected sex is a risky behavior that at least provides them with a form of intimacy and affection that they do not otherwise receive.

Shaka McGlotten also engages the ways black queers employ the web as part of their sexuality but examines it from the perspective of the body as “data.” In “Black Data,” he employs the notion of “black data” to explore the ways in which black queer people are hailed, as well as ignored or forgotten, by big data. He also explores the ways black queers trouble the increasingly invisible or taken-for-granted operations of states and corporations that seek to acquire and store detailed dossiers of citizen-consumers. Thus, “black data” evokes counter- or hidden knowledges and stealthy forms of resistance (“black ops”). In particular, McGlotten applies a materialist black queer analytic to the “deep web,” the algorithms, databases, and protocols that make up the vast majority of the Internet but which are usually hidden from view. Drawing on case studies from everyday life and artistic practice, McGlotten links the deep web to the ways black bodies, and especially black queer bodies, are understood as data points, as statistical objects or deviations, rather than as ontologically material persons. In other words, how do black queers navigate the perils of data fields in online queer spaces where disclosing one’s racial identity can make one vulnerable to violence?

The virtual is not only a space of contestation relative to racialized sexual desire but also as an antiblack and anti queer mobilizing force perpetuated in the name of neighborhood “safety.” Zachary Blair’s “Boystown: Gay Neighborhoods, Social Media, and the (Re)production of Racism” takes up these questions by examining the response of residents to a rash of violent neighborhood muggings purportedly perpetrated by black queer youth in the Boystown “gayborhood” on the north side of Chicago. Blair demonstrates how local discourses and processes and contemporary social formations are shaped and reshaped at the dynamic interface of cultural representations, collective processes, and individual subjectivity. Through analyzing the discourses that emerged on a Facebook page created to increase communication and organization among neighborhood residents

and the Chicago police, Blair highlights how issues of race, gender, class, and sexuality quickly dominated all forms of communication on the web page and became a hostile arena that shaped social relations and divided neighborhood residents.

Continuing the focus on black queer geographies and the political economic effects of gentrification is Kwame Holmes's "Beyond the Flames: Queering the History of the 1968 D.C. Riot." Traditionally, historians locate the origins of black communal violence within housing shortages, systemic unemployment, and police brutality endemic to the post-World War II American ghetto. Here though, Holmes asserts that the sexual valences of ghettoization contributed to black urbanites' willingness to eschew the rational course of liberal reform in favor of the riotous release offered by the destruction of private property. Focusing on the Shaw area of Washington, D.C., Holmes engages the metropolitan police department's sexual regulation of black commercial areas, the sexual anxieties spawned by overcrowding in slum housing, and the symbolic work queer black residents, across the sexuality spectrum performed to mark the neighborhood as in decline.

The carceral state affects both black queers as much as the heterosexual black community. In "The Strangeness of Progress and the Uncertainty of Blackness," Treva Ellison analyzes the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, the largest federal policing bill in U.S. history, to understand how the discursive production of black nonnormativity and gender nonconformity fits into the production of blackness as existing outside juridical and ethical universality. The author argues that under neoliberal multiculturalism, antiblack racism is reproduced via inclusive reforms based on gender and sexuality. The impossibility of legal redress for black injury opens up the possibility for the production of representational spaces of convergence to talk about how multiple experiences of harm and violence cohere around the production of places of absence of ethical concern. Because blackness is at once overseen and unknown to the law, a contradiction that conditions spatial differentiation, Ellison considers what a politics of scale can do for multiple expressions of blackness in the current moment.

Audre Lorde is a much-revered figure within black queer studies. Her theorization of the erotic is often used to articulate a mode of solidarity in which people from disparate backgrounds can come together to combat oppression. In "Re-membering Audre: Adding Lesbian Feminist Mother Poet to Black," however, Amber Jamilla Musser refocuses our attention

on Lorde's identity politics. She asks how Lorde's claiming of the labels *lesbian*, *feminist*, *mother*, and *poet* shift our understanding of the erotic to grapple more fully with the legacy that black lesbian feminism has left to queer studies. In particular, Musser argues that Lorde's identity politics rescript the place of the mother and lesbian sex within black queer studies. Lorde theorizes both together as an important sphere of political action, thereby enlarging genealogies of black lesbian feminism and providing new avenues with which to think queer theory.

Also paying homage to Audre Lorde, but with an eye toward popular culture and contemporary social movements, is Kaila Adia Story in "On the Cusp of Deviance: Respectability Politics and the Cultural Marketplace of Sameness," a polemic that questions the efficacy of homonormativity. The essay examines the consequences of presenting identity as an "either/or" or "and/or" dichotomy through the visual and rhetorical strategies of the "return to marriage and respectability" platforms of black heteronormativity and the whitening and sanitizing platforms of the marriage equality movement. Throughout the essay, Story elucidates how the "old" way of doing racialized sexuality work is still very much present within popular media. Further, she discusses the possessive investment in the whitening of the same-sex marriage movement and the investment in heteronormativity by black cultural icons like Tyler Perry and Steve Harvey. She urges queer people of color to continue their fight for their own agency and spaces, and to do so with a consciousness that shows how their oppression has functioned primarily through the state's racialization of their gendered and sexual identities.

Alexis Pauline Gumbs and Julia Roxanne Wallace's "Something Else to Be: Generations of Black Queer Brilliance and the Mobile Homecoming Experiential Archive" continues the tradition of their foremothers such as Audre Lorde, Barbara Smith, and Pat Parker—black lesbian activists grounded in quotidian theory. Drawing on the archive of the Mobile Homecoming Project, a cross-country project in which the authors travel the United States creating ritual for and with black LGBTQ visionaries, the essay looks at what it means to move from individual recognition (neither white nor male nor straight) to a collective "something else to be." Putting pleasurable queer pressure on the terms *generation*, *brilliance*, and *home*, this piece uses the concept of the "experiential archive" not to insert the value of difference into an existing narrative or to draw on normative resources but rather to generate alternative resources and narratives for coming home.



Over the past decade or so, I have mentored over a dozen graduate students, many of whom are now tenured professors and have their own monographs. It has been a privilege to watch them begin as curious students and blossom into fierce theorists, activists, and performers. And while I often tease a few of them about remaining on the teat too long and that my “milk” is all gone, the truth is, I secretly want all of them to stay close to the nest, not so that I may necessarily continue to nourish *them* but so that they may continue to teach *me*. The essays collected in *No Tea, No Shade* have done just that. They have energized me to think differently about how quickly the world can turn—for the better. To continue to throw shade on the heteronormative reproduction trope and celebrate its resignification in ballroom culture, the House of Black Queer Studies was built by mothers and fathers (and those who embody both) who were/are grand and fierce, but it is the children who are constantly remodeling the house, keeping it updated, and making it the envy of the neighbors, all the while slaying and snatching trophies as their parents watch on with a careful side eye—no tea, no shade!<sup>34</sup>

#### NOTES

1. John D’Emilio, *The World Turned: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

2. “Children” is a black gay vernacular term that refers to other gay folks of any age. My usage here in particular does not necessarily refer to chronological age because some of the contributors are my contemporaries, while some are considerably younger. I do mean to suggest, however, that despite *chronological* age, all these scholars are young in the profession.

3. See Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

4. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson, “Introduction: Queering Black Studies/‘Quaring’ Queer Studies,” in Johnson and Henderson, eds., *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 1.

5. Johnson and Henderson, “Introduction,” 2, 90–105.

6. One of the critiques of the critique of the absence of diaspora theory is that oftentimes theories of diaspora proceed as if they have no relation to U.S. imperialism, as if displacement did not and does not continue to occur within U.S. borders or, alternatively, that the diasporic subject is always already at odds with an American one. In *The Erotic Life of Racism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), Sharon Holland argues that this myopic definition of diaspora, paralleled with a concomitant



binary of “United States–based vs. diasporic,” “is blind to the ways in which native peoples have also shaped discourse about the diasporic as well as the national, both at home and abroad” (86).

7. D’Emilio, *World Turned*, ix–x.

8. Cornell University and Dartmouth University both did searches in such areas in 2013, and Spelman College, a women’s historically black institution, conducted a search for a scholar of black queer theory in 2014.

9. These faculty include Lyndon K. Gill, Omi Osun Joni Jones, Xavier Livermon, Matt Richardson, Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley, and Lisa B. Thompson.

10. See, for example, the special issue of *Gender, Place and Culture*, edited by Marlon M. Bailey and Rashad Shabazz, “Gender and Sexual Geographies of Blackness: New Black Cartographies of Resistance and Survival (Part 2),” 21, no. 4 (2014); Jafari S. Allen, “Black/Queer/Diaspora at the Current Conjuncture,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 18, nos. 2–3 (2012): 211–48; and Stacey Patton, “Who’s Afraid of Black Sexuality?” *Chronicle of Higher Education* (December 3, 2012): 1–25.

11. Shaka McGlotten, *Virtual Intimacies: Media, Affect, and Queer Sociality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014), 3.

12. Dwight A. McBride, *Why I Hate Abercrombie and Fitch: Essays on Race and Sexuality* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 110.

13. Gary Fischer, *Gary in Your Pocket*, ed. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 65.

14. Robert Reid-Pharr, *Black Gay Man* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 94.

15. McBride, *Why I Hate Abercrombie and Fitch*, 98.

16. Marlon M. Bailey, “What I’m Told, What I Want, and What I Do” (paper presented at the Whose Beloved Community? conference, Emory University, Atlanta, GA, March 28, 2014).

17. The term “mother” comes from the black ballroom scene and denotes someone who plays a motherly figure but who does not necessarily have to be a biological woman.

18. In *Unlimited Intimacy: Reflections on the Subculture of Bareback* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), Tim Dean examines the practice of barebacking primarily among white queer men in San Francisco. The study is an important contribution to the reconceptualization of sexual desire in the context of HIV/AIDS prevention discourse and the homonormative impulse of contemporary queer culture. Curiously, Dean’s study does not focus on the practice of barebacking among men of color and particularly black men. I use the term “curious” because of the statistics that suggest that black men who have sex with other men are more likely than any other group to seroconvert. Moreover, when Dean does discuss race at any substantive length, it is to take to task two black scholars—Frantz Fanon and Dwight A. McBride—for

their critiques of racial fetishism. This critique of Fanon and McBride is followed by a brief close reading of a porn film titled *Niggas' Revenge*. I leave to others to engage the merits of Dean's reading of Fanon, McBride, and *Niggas' Revenge*, but what I find troubling is how, on the one hand, Dean ignores an important racialized population, failing to get its perspective on barebacking, and, on the other, rigorously critiques (on different grounds) two black scholars' responses to racial fetish. Fanon and McBride are not beyond critique, but it seems disingenuous not to buttress a critique of the *experience* of racial fetish with counterexamples from other raced subjects, particularly when the study in question is based on ethnographic methods.

19. Essex Hemphill, "Now We Think," in *Ceremonies: Prose and Poetry* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1992), 169.

20. This is another point on which new theorists and older ones may diverge. In other words, whereas black queer theorists of my generation and earlier might condone the *analysis* of raw sex, some of the new black queer theorists also condone the *practice* of raw sex and sometimes acknowledge their own engagement in and enjoyment of such practices in print. I would argue that this, too, exemplifies another major shift between the generations of scholars.

21. See, for example, Mireille Miller-Young, *A Taste for Brown Sugar: Black Women in Pornography* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014) and Jennifer C. Nash, *The Black Body in Ecstasy: Reading Race, Reading Pornography* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

22. Vincent Woodard, *The Delectable Negro: Human Consumption and Homoeroticism within U.S. Slave Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 220.

23. Black feminist theorist Jennifer Nash also develops a provocative analytic that she calls "black anality" in order to argue "how black female sexuality is imagined to be rooted in (and perhaps generative of) certain kinds of filthy spaces, particularly the ghetto; how black sexuality is constructed as literally and metaphorically dirty; how black sexuality is posited as toxic, nonproductive, and nonreproductive; and how black sexuality is imagined as wasteful." Nash sees her argument as a critique of black feminist theory, which "has long examined the buttocks as an imagined locus of racial-sexual difference and which has developed a set of analytics that now predominate in the study of black female sexualities: spectacularity, excess, grotesquerie, and display." See Jennifer Nash, "Black Anality," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 20, no. 4 (2014): 441.

24. Miller-Young, *Taste for Brown Sugar*, viii.

25. Evelyn M. Hammonds, "Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality," in *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, eds. Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 136–56.

26. Sharon Patricia Holland, *The Erotic Life of Racism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 68–69.

27. Hammonds, "Black (W)holes," 152 (emphasis added).

28. Hortense Spillers, "Interstices: A Small Drama of Words," in *Black, White and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 152. I wish to note, however, that some black feminists of this new generation of scholars point out the tensions between black feminism and black queer theory. Brittney C. Cooper raises serious concerns about what she sees as black feminism not being taken seriously as "theory" and instead co-opted by black queer theorists (specifically black and Latino male writers) who "place us [black feminist theorists] on a pedestal, styling black feminism as a foundational stepping stone to other more exciting sites of inquiry while another group reduces our contributions to the status of the intervention, allowing them to engage in liberal acts of incorporation and inclusion, and then move on, in the name of progress" (12). See Cooper, "Love No Limit: Towards a Black Feminist Future (In Theory)," *The Black Scholar* 45, no. 4 (2015): 12–14.

29. L. H. Stallings, *Mutha' Is Half a Word: Intersections of Folklore, Vernacular, Myth, and Queerness in Black Female Culture* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2007), 1.

30. Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

31. Matt Richardson, *The Queer Limit of Black Memory: Black Lesbian Literature and Irresolution* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2013), 7.

32. *Still Black* follows the lives of six female-to-male transgender men. The film is the first of its kind to focus exclusively on the experiences of black transmen. In addition to winning the Queer Black Cinema Isaac Julien Experimental Award and the Reelout Film Festival Audience Choice Best Documentary Award, the film is taught in gender studies courses across the country. Page and Richardson's essay theorizes how black transgender people are subject to institutionalized racism that demands "from all Blacks their conformity with gendered embodiments of racially disciplined civility" (57). See Enoch H. Page and Matt U. Richardson, "On the Fear of Small Numbers: A Twenty-first-Century Prolegomenon of the U.S. Black Transgender Experience," in *Black Sexualities: Probing Powers, Passions, Practices, and Policies*, eds. Juan Battle and Sandra Barnes (Newark: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 57–81. Finally, the number of black transgender scholars who are in tenure-track positions or tenured has increased enormously over the past few years. Among these are Treva Ellison, Kai M. Green, Matt Richardson, and C. Riley Snorton, to name a few.

33. Allen, "Black/Queer/Diaspora at the Current Conjuncture," 211.

34. In ballroom parlance, "slay and snatch" means to "beat your competitors and snatch (win) a trophy." See Marlon M. Bailey, *Butch Queens Up in Pumps: Gender, Performance, and Ballroom Culture in Detroit* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 253–54.