

### “A Deep and Ongoing Dive into the Brutal Humanism that Undergirds Liberalism”: An Interview with Jasbir K. Puar

#### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This interview with Jasbir K. Puar—professor at the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey—was conducted to mark the tenth anniversary of her influential book *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (TA). Published in 2007 by Duke University Press, TA now has a new 2017 expanded anniversary edition with a foreword by Tavia Nyong’o and a new postscript by Puar. TA has been translated into Spanish and French. It is a book whose influence is not restricted to the academy. Puar’s formulations, insights, arguments, and provocations have featured prominently in queer activist circles against racism, Islamophobia, and Zionism in North America, Western Europe, and Israel/ Palestine. The book’s political valence has also been a part of ongoing conversations on the emerging alliances between queer politics, neoliberalism, and Hindu nationalism (Hindutva) in India—the locational context of my engagement.

The provocation that TA offers can be summed up using the title of a piece that Puar wrote in the *Guardian* in 2010: “To Be Gay and Racist Is No Anomaly.”<sup>2</sup> Reflecting on new kinds of queer mobilizations in the wake of September 11, 2001, TA pursues an inquiry into how emerging intimacies between racism, nationalism, and Islamophobia were recruiting queers to further the ends of US imperialism and exceptionalism. The militarized US state that was executing invasions in Afghanistan was mobilizing the consent of white queer Americans by luring them into the folds of liberal citizenship.

Even among those who have never read the book, Puar has become known for the word “homonationalism.” Over the last decade, the word has attained a currency independent of Puar’s formulation and is mostly used to refer to the conservative turn in queer politics with the emergence of the nationalist, secular, monogamous, married, and propertied homosexual subject. In a 2017 essay, Puar offered an important clarification as to why it is unhelpful to reduce homonationalism to a pejorative accusation. For her,

Homonationalism is . . . not simply a synonym for gay racism or another way to critique the “conservatization” of gay and lesbian identities, but instead an analytic for apprehending the consequences of the successes of the LGBT movement . . . I do not think of homonationalism as an identity nor a position—it is not another marker meant

to cleave a “good” (progressive/ transgressive/ politically left) queer from a “bad” (sold out/ conservative/ politically bankrupt) queer. Rather, I have theorized homonationalism as an assemblage of de- and re-territorializing forces, affects, energies and movements . . . In naming a movement in U.S. queer politics, homonationalism is only useful in how it offers a way to track historical shifts in the term of modernity, even as it has become mobilized within the very shifts it was produced to name.<sup>3</sup>

An instance of such a historical shift was apparent at the huge corporate-funded pride event called the Christopher Street Day parade that I attended in Berlin in June 2010. At the culmination of the parade, a large crowd gathered to watch Judith Butler being awarded the Zivilcourage (Civil Courage) Prize. Butler was introduced as a “determined critic” by one of the organizers and was called on stage to accept the award. Butler took the award in her hand, went up to the microphone and said:

When I considered what it means today to accept such an award, I believe that I would actually lose my courage, if I would simply accept the prize under the present political conditions . . . I must distance myself from this complicity with racism, including anti-Muslim racism. We have recognized that lesbian, gay, trans, queer people, can be used by warmongers.<sup>4</sup>

By making her refusal clear, Butler went on to say that queers are being co-opted into the politics of racist hatred that justify the war on terror, and they have been used to advocate in favor of anti-immigrant policies and media campaigns in the name of protecting the “modern” and “progressive” culture of Germany from contamination by the “backward” and “homophobic” outsider, who is almost always cast as Muslim. Butler offered the prize to anti-racist queer groups in Berlin, whom she acknowledged are more deserving of it because of their consistent resistance against practices of racism and Islamophobia among queer organizing in Berlin. There was resounding applause from the crowd. While some of the organizers tried to say things to defend themselves, all was drowned out in the cacophonous uproar.

At the 2011 San Francisco Pride Parade, a photograph circulating on the Internet showed a float carrying two people—one was a leather-wearing, whip-lashing gay man (presumably a Dungeon Master) who was using a nuclear missile to sodomize the then-Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad with his pants down. The float was organized by a group called Iran 180, formed by the New York Jewish Community Relations Council, and claimed to bring attention to Iran’s so-called nuclear belligerence.<sup>5</sup> Among the many reasons for the United States’s strained relationship with Iran is that Iran executes “gay” people. I use the term within quotation marks because several nongovernmental organizations both in North America and Western Europe repeatedly attempt to capture human rights violations against queer people in Iran by reducing their experiences to meet Western identitarian constructs. In effect, they represent Iran as backward, barbaric, and homophobic, on most occasions with catastrophic consequences for queer people and queer rights activists in Iran.<sup>6</sup> Such representations have caused a systematic erasure of methods of negotiation and resistance from within Islamic societies that testify to a much more layered understanding of the lives of queer people and the relationships they share with their religion and state.<sup>7</sup>

In another instance, consider the way in which racist violence in Charleston was displaced by the celebrations surrounding the US Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell v Hodges* legalizing same-sex marriage in June 2015.<sup>8</sup> Commenting on how queer celebrations following the *Obergefell* judgment could mask racist violence in Charleston, Kimberlé Crenshaw wrote on Facebook:

Nine dead people—killed while worshipping—are now afterthoughts, to be squeezed into the celebration of American Democracy. So now . . . Black people can marry whomever they please, but we can't vote, worship, represent our people, swim, shop, or walk the streets without fear of being discriminated against or even killed. So on this day of sorrow and celebration, this is what democracy looks like.<sup>9</sup>

The insights that *TA* offered about the nationalist, racist, and Islamophobic complicities in LGBTQ politics in the United States and Western Europe pursued in the name of liberal rights and queer liberation, and the simultaneous demonization of Iraq, Iran, and other putatively queer-unfriendly locations in the world to justify military interventions, was something that got me thinking about queer politics in India in a way that I had not done before.

The public face of queer politics in India has also been almost singularly fixated on decriminalization of sodomy and the right to privacy—and looking at law reform as the most effective way to address questions of discrimination. Thus, landmark judgments have been the key milestones for marking the progress of the queer movement. So, the *Koushal* decision of the Supreme Court—which came a few months before India's national elections in 2014—was considered a moment of defeat because of its overturning of the 2002 *Naz* decision of the Delhi High Court that had decriminalized sodomy.<sup>10</sup> In the din of statements by political parties on the *Koushal* judgment, the then-ruling party, the Indian National Congress, declared that they would support legislation in parliament to repeal Sec. 377 of the Indian Penal Code—the colonial antisodomy law. The Congress party even went on to include this commitment in their election manifesto.<sup>11</sup> Such a commitment by a major political party at that time was unprecedented, and was an acknowledgement of the impact that the anti-377 movement has had on public and political consciousness in India. Of course, this acknowledgment also pointed to pre-election consideration of urban and elite queers (and their corporate allies) as a constituency and perhaps even a sizeable vote-bank. While the Congress's move was celebrated by many, I would argue that it was used as a convenient ploy to portray itself as progressive (in contrast to the Hindu supremacist and proto-fascist Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] that won the election in 2014), to distract from the fact that it was the same Congress government that had unleashed brutal armed violence against India's Adivasi populations, at the behest of huge mining corporations.<sup>12</sup> The move was a classic instance of the perverse use of the promise of liberation through law to the sexually marginalized, on the one hand, and the exercise of state-sanctioned violence on peasants and ethnic minorities on the other.<sup>13</sup>

The 2018 *Navtej Johar* judgment overruling *Koushal* came at a time when the Congress was gone and the celebratory fusion of Hindutva and neoliberalism had reached its zenith. Does the putative progressiveness of the judgment have anything to do with the BJP being in power? Were the judges moved to respond because the classical dancer Navtej Johar and his co-petitioners are queer celebrities belonging to a particular class with

global visibility? How do we apprehend the consequences of this victory, which is also characterized by a happy embrace of queerness by the corporate media, lifestyle brands, and commercial cinema? At the same time, state impunity for violence against Dalits, Adivasis, peasants, and Muslims has reached unprecedented proportions. Pride parades are organized in several cities and towns of India with police protection every year, while the police beat up protestors at anti-caste and anti-Hindutva gatherings or just step back to let Hindutva groups do the beating.

Puar's work offers an important framework to think about this co-existence of an emerging state-market tolerance toward queers, and absolute state apathy toward Dalits, Muslims, peasants, trans persons, and Adivasis.<sup>14</sup> Although Puar never meant her idea of homonationalism to be a portable one that can be applied unproblematically outside of the context in which she wrote *TA*, it is possible to identify resonances in the kind of preliminary critiques that have emerged in the wake of the *Navtej Johar* judgment.<sup>15</sup>

Days following the judgment, social media was filled with celebratory messages and memes. India, these declared, has finally rid itself of a colonial taint. The judiciary was congratulated for enabling a decolonization of sorts. Everyone from Uber to Bollywood stars joined in the rainbow flag unfurling party.<sup>16</sup> The trending hashtags were #loveislove and #lovewins and in one meme, the first hashtag featured as the text written inside the map of India—marked by its political borders and filled with rainbow colors. It was not hard to notice that the cartographic imagination that love and the rainbow covered included Kashmir as an integral part of the Indian nation. The win for love in India reinforced an idea of an Indian nation that does not violently occupy Kashmir through its army. Queer emancipation from a colonial law happily co-existed with India's settler colonial control over Kashmir. Both were being celebrated with equal aplomb. In August 2019, the Indian state formalized its military occupation by denying Kashmiris their rights to political and cultural self-determination. This has been followed by the gains of *Navtej Johar* being used as a homonationalist justification for India's occupation of Kashmir so that Kashmiri queers can now enjoy the putative freedom that Indian democracy has benevolently bestowed upon them.<sup>17</sup> Thinking with *TA*, I don't see these developments as conspiratorial, but as the condition of postcolonial liberalism that enables certain forms of queer mobilizations.<sup>18</sup>

What is the analytical charge of homonationalism at the current moment across spaces and times from when the idea was developed and put into the world over a decade back? While finalizing this interview, which was carried out over an extended period of time, Jasbir and I wondered if there is any merit in lending contemporaneity to the conversation in the wake of Covid-19 and the Black Lives Matter uprisings in the United States. We decided against doing so in order to maintain fidelity to the initial impetus for the interview, which was to mark *TA*'s ten-year anniversary. This is what Jasbir said about resisting the desire to make current:

As with many friends facing revising pre-Covid publications to speak to the present moment, we were daunted by the prospect of, to use Wendy Chun's phrase, "updating to remain the same."<sup>19</sup> One of my very favorite Indian sub-continent colloquialisms is "Same same but very different only." That is how I feel these days—continuity, rupture, and recursivity—not only is it perplexing to assess what is what, but also unto themselves these measurements of shifts and patterns feel altered if not inadequate as terms of discussion. If we are living through an acceleration of time, both

watching and making history unfold, it is also the case that, unlike 9/11, pre-Covid may never be followed by a post-Covid world. In the spirit of “Same same but very different only,” we decided to leave the interview alone.

The interview was conducted over email, with multiple rounds of exchanges to follow up with queries and additional revisions. I annotated the text with references and footnotes. The text has been edited for clarity.

### Interview

**Oishik Sircar (OS):** *Tell us briefly about yourself. Anyone interested can find out who you are by Googling you. What would an “otherwise” bio (hat tip to Povinelli) read like, if you wanted to tell someone not in your field/s about your scholarly, political, personal, preoccupations?*<sup>20</sup>

**Jasbir K. Puar (JKP):** I seem to live very permeable thresholds of scholarly, political, and personal realms so my guess is the otherwise bio is not so otherwise. As is likely gleaned from *TA*, I grew up in a faith community in New Jersey in the 1970s and 80s, in a very religious Sikh family—I can say in retrospect, fundamentalist, though I did not understand that at the time. This was at the height of the Khalistani separatist movement in India, and as a family we were at the Indian consulate in New York City regularly protesting Indira Gandhi’s repression of Sikhs in Punjab. When Gandhi was assassinated in 1984, I wrote an op-ed for the high school newspaper explaining the Sikh pogroms. We lived in an all-white Jersey suburb where we were class-inappropriate and I’m not sure any of my classmates or teachers understood the op-ed, much less my growing political consciousness. Despite our divergences around religion, I do credit this atmosphere with a kind of militancy that was fostered in our family. Since I was very young, I actively dis-identified with the state of India. So, I had a burgeoning critique of the nation-state throughout my youth.

**OS:** *There is a professional persona of the scholar that we cultivate in the ways in which we present ourselves on our faculty profiles, on our websites, and on social media. I’m not on any social media, except Instagram, which I find quite joyful to post on and to see images posted by others. I follow your account. You only post images of artworks and installations from galleries that you have visited in different parts of the world. Tell us about your interest in art, and what made you decide to curate your Instagram profile in this way.*

**JKP:** I actually have two accounts on Instagram, one for my dog, Chucho, who is a protest dog and writes little political screeds about the orange man and the state of the world while posing in all sorts of adorable ways. For a while, I was really interested in how one becomes a (Pet) Influencer on Instagram and whether I could launch a sustained political critique through such a status. You know most—well, all—dog accounts that are huge are driven by personalities organized around modelling and branding of consumer items. Momagers are always dressing their dogs in elaborate outfits—this seems unnecessary. I was also fascinated by the scale of social media and of course by the phenomenon of virality. One time, Chucho posted a long rant about DACA—the Deferred Actions for Childhood Arrivals immigration policy—that got picked up by a political account that had 3.2 million followers. I thought we made it! His post and his photo, where he is reading Angela Davis’ *Freedom is a Constant Struggle*, got 25,000 likes. And that translated



Fig. 1. @chuco\_the\_protest\_dog's Instagram post on September 11, 2017 marking the 10 years of TA

into only 200 new followers or so. This was an interesting lesson for me about the uncharted scales of social media and the unruly, opaque lives of algorithms (Figure 1).

And yes, I have an “art from the peripheries” account where I post art that moves me or is significant wherever I am travelling. It’s sort of an alternative to travel selfies and art is also something I truly enjoy seeing no matter where I am, as a mode of geopolitical orientation and contextualization. Both accounts actually started as efforts to enjoy social media without subjecting myself to the ongoing attacks on my work and my character, to communicate with friends and community without worrying about what would be reposted as a tweet or being trolled. Chuco functions as a kind of alter ego and a crafty vehicle for political engagement. The art Instagram account is my way of staying aesthetically attuned in the midst of these days of accelerated political challenges.

**OS:** *About the art on the covers of TA's 2007 and 2017 editions. The first is by Chitra Ganesh titled “Unnatural Disappearance” (Figure 2) and the second by Imran Qureshi titled “Opening Word of this New Scripture” (Figure 3). You make a reference to Ganesh’s work in TA while discussing indefinite detention. Tell us about the process of deciding on these particular artists and their artworks for the covers? How do they, or do they, speak to the book in any way? How do you relate your work and thinking to art?*

**JKP:** Chitra’s work, this installation piece in particular, was really important, because for me it was a non-representational work—not abstract, but not iconic either—that energetically gestured to all of the issues in *TA*. Her work is flourishing in so many beautiful ways, and I am glad that this moment in her trajectory is part of the life history of *TA*. The cover of the new edition of *TA* is from Qureshi’s series on, loosely stated, combustion and color. When I saw this series, I knew it resonated with the kind of demanding, insistent, frenzied energy of *TA*. When Amy Buchanan, the designs manager at Duke University Press, sent me the cover options, I was blown away by how she managed to amplify the political and aesthetic anger of the artwork. I wrote her to affirm that she captured the ferocity of both the art and the text.

As for my latest book *The Right to Maim*, Wangechi Mutu's work has always moved me, fascinated me, for the figural becomings always going on in her videos and paintings, a kind of aesthetic enactment of Hortense Spiller's ungendering and the flesh, for example, of "bodyminds reimagined," following the title of Sami Schalk's excellent book. I really admire and am always taken by Mutu's approach to transformation and the incredible way she maneuvers with and through color. I saw that piece and it really spoke to me about the constantly moving assemblage of debility, capacity, disability, and about movement of bodyminds that are not about conventional notions of physical mobility.

I have a few things at home, work from friends amassed over the last two decades: a Palestinian artist Ahed Izhiman, Sehar Shah, Ranjit Kandalgaonkar (who is based in Mumbai), as well as contemporary U.S. artists like Marina Zurkow, Xylor Jane, Faith Wilding, and Candice Lim. And a fair amount of other work that I have found at random flea markets and art fairs. I am really moved by explorations in color, geometric experiments, and anything grappling with math, repetition, or patterning.

**OS:** *One of the most affecting portions in TA for me was the acknowledgements. Seldom have I come across an acknowledgement section written with such pathos. The way you juxtapose your brother's sudden passing (to whom you dedicate TA) and the beginning of the U.S. invasion of Iraq was painful and at the same time powerful to read. Drawing on Derrida, you organize your thank-yous under the sign of mourning, and invite the reader to think about the broken conditions under which the work of writing sometimes happens. The acknowledgement then becomes an account of the "affective communities" (to use Leela Gandhi's expression) that can lend care, nurturance, and friendship to scholarly endeavors under conditions of personal and political precarity.<sup>21</sup> This is especially borne out in the way you say how Amit Rai wrote with you when you couldn't write alone, or how you drew strength from the way your parents carried their wounds with integrity. Tell us a little about the writing of the acknowledgement and the place of affective labor in your scholarly life. I ask this also because you are doing something to what you call the "acknowledgement genre." In what way did you wish to reimagine it for your purposes? What led to the decision to include it at the end of the book, and not the beginning, as is the general convention?*

**JKP:** Well I think the book, which I wrote in about three years, the ones following Sandeep's death, is saturated with grief on so many levels, not just the acknowledgements. Writing it became my primary outlet for the labor and process of mourning. After the initial months of support from family and friends, the expectation to privatize (my) grief was this unspoken yet very heavy mandate. I was reading the minor literature on adult sibling loss and the very little psychoanalysis that actually complicates Oedipal narratives of desire with the power of libidinal yet not incestuous sibling formations—I still find this aporia in psychoanalytic theories fascinating. I thought, there is some kind of insularity reinforced in all these literatures that is deeply alienating, about the individual's psychic losses, atomizing loss in a depoliticized manner.

I was desperate, honestly, during those years, to transform the singularity of grieving into relations of collective grief. Otherwise, I was left with a narrative of exceptional middle-class family tragedy that isolated me, pathologized our family, and depoliticized death. There is so much phobia around "out of order" deaths because they shatter fantasies of entitled longevity. Our family became kind of like a contaminant, as if we did some-

thing wrong, like a biopolitical failure. Of course, this projection of failure indexes a tremendous amount of privilege. People said to us all the time, “Sandeep died so young,” (he was 32) and I’d always think: but compared to whom? Over time I started experiencing this “loss” as it were as an incredible privilege.

I think my work since has been driven by this desire to de-privatize the grief of my brother’s death, to de-exceptionalize it and to connect it with other losses, especially collective losses. This might be odd to say, but losing Sandeep really concretized for me the geopolitics of biopolitics and biopolitical thought, and compelled me to learn loss and mourning differently, from a biopolitical vantage where life chances are interconnected across populations. And as I indicate in *TA*, I was floundering in the incommensurability of singular grief and the horrific magnitude of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, which started the month after his passing. This conjuncture keeps forcing me to ask, in a larger and more global sense beyond the preservation of the biopolitically viable nuclear family: how do people live in relation to death, in what Julie Livingston and Zoë Wool call “collateral afterworlds,” where spaces of redemption are shrinking or absent?<sup>22</sup> Interrogating exceptionalism in relation to the metrics of biopolitical privilege has been a pivotal ongoing political project for me, and I think that process is reflected not only in *TA*, but also in *The Right to Maim*.

Having said all that, it is now sixteen years since Sandeep’s death, and getting older without him increasingly crushes me in ways that are very distinct from having to cope with the initial loss when he died. That grieving is never over, and always morphing, that grief has its way—these are perhaps the most universal of experiences.

I’m not sure if there was a deliberate idea behind putting the acknowledgements at the end of the book. They marked the end of a journey—maybe the first installation of grieving—and it seemed right that they mark that end at the end, even though perhaps many people read the acknowledgements first. I’m not sure I actually understand why acknowledgements are typically at the beginning of any text, given that they are meant to refract the thick culmination of a complex voyage. And that voyage of mourning is at the heart of *TA*, it made *TA* what it is.

**OS:** *Could you tell us a little about your disciplinary training, political/ scholarly inheritances, and activist engagements that led you to thinking about writing TA. What were you observing, who were you in conversation with, and learning from? How did your previous work on Trinidad inform TA?*

**JKP:** Researching in Trinidad taught me something about modernity and nation-state formation, and, following Jacqui Alexander’s work on the sexual outlaw, that there was a racial hierarchy embedded in the modernity of the outlaw. During graduate school, I also had been organizing in the Bay Area with Narika, the Asian Women’s Shelter, and TriKone. We were having intense debates about identity, queerness, nationalism, diaspora.

After grad school I was in the midst of putting together a tenure book on globalization and sexuality, with Trinidad as an anchor of sorts, when September 11 happened. And I started writing, first with my dear friend Amit Rai. We wrote the article “Monster-Terrorist-Fag.” We were going to meetings, so many meetings—it was crisis organizing in a sense, and different from anything I had been a part of. I realized in that process that my training as a queer theorist, as someone who works on transnational sexualities, was in need of some serious *stretching* (I think of Fanon’s assessment of Marxism when I use this

# TERRORIST ASSEMBLAGES

homonationalism in queer times



jasbir k. puar

Fig. 2. "Unnatural Disappearance" by Chitra Ganesh/ Cover of the 2007 edition of *Terrorist Assemblages*. Image courtesy of Duke University Press.

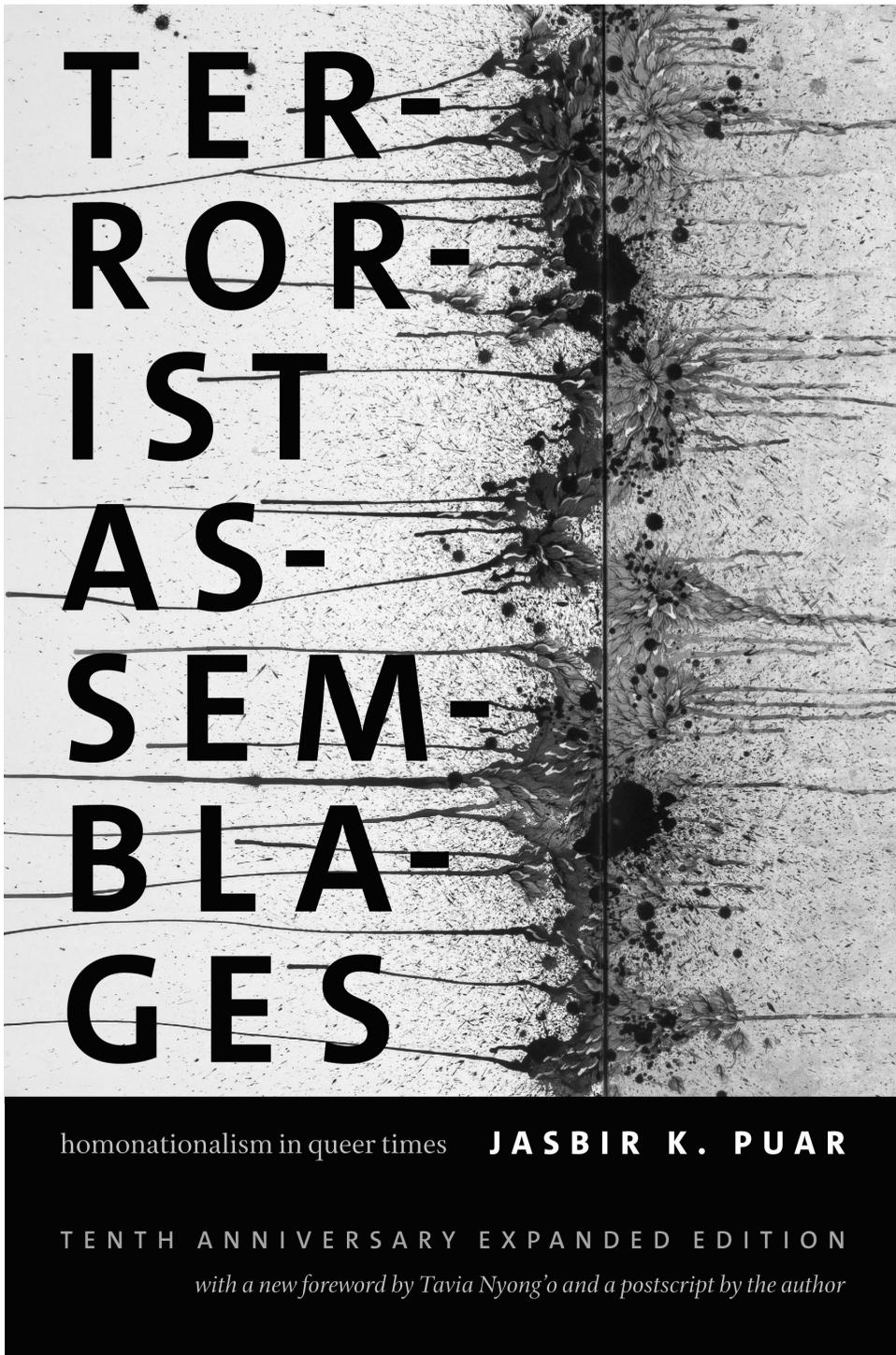


Fig. 3. “Opening Word of this New Scripture” by Imran Qureshi/ Cover of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition (2017) of *Terrorist Assemblages*. Image courtesy of Duke University Press.

word) in order to say something coherent about the crisis of public debate and dissent that was emerging in this “post 9/11” period. It was a time when a certain version of fascism really revealed itself, there was bipartisan support for the War on Terror, and it was not easy to go against this generalized trajectory, at least not at first.

I spent a lot of time with folks at the Audre Lorde Project in New York City in those years, and learned so much from them—they were always ahead of the curve, and they released a fantastic statement on the War on Terror that challenged a lot of liberal LGBTQ thinking at the time.<sup>23</sup> I was also on the steering committee of the South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association (SALGA). These were PoC (persons of color) community spaces already doing the work of challenging mainstream LGBTQ organizations that promoted non-intersectional political projects on same-sex marriage, on gay and lesbian rights.

**OS:** *In TA you had mentioned that you were working on a film project with SALGA. What was that about, and what has happened to it?*

**JKP:** It was a film on the efforts in the late 90s, which were eventually successful, of South Asian queer groups to lobby the Federation of Indian Affairs to have a contingent in the annual India Day Parade. I think we titled it “India Shining.” I had always been conflicted about this organizing agenda because as a Sikh queer I had no interest in demanding space within the Hindutva Indian nation-state. But this was pre-social media and debates about visibility were driven by the creation of community through identification and recognition, through what it meant to see yourself represented. Then there were debates over the NYC Pride Parade. I will never forget one SALGA meeting where a newer member said they would not march in the pride parade if we were carrying signs protesting the Indian government’s role in the 2002 anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat. Janhavi Pakrashi, a.k.a. DJ Tikka Masala, a former student of mine at Rutgers, did a lot of work on the film, as did Professor Soniya Munshi. Eventually we ran out of time and money, but we did have at least twenty interviews with current and former SALGA members about their views on the India Day Parade, on communal and religious identities, on diasporic fractures in the queer desi community.

As pretty much the only Sikh in these circuits, these questions about hierarchies in the diaspora were important to me because I did ponder, and still do, the relative absence of Sikh queers. About 5 years ago Sarbat members from London held a meeting in NYC; I believe they are the only Sikh LGBTQ organization in the world. I was one of two women, there were about two dozen men, and not only was I the oldest, but there was no one even of or close to my generation. It was the sweetest meeting, predominantly working-class young immigrant men talking about wanting to get married to their boyfriends in their local gurdwara. I was surprised at first: like, wait, everyone wants to get married?! Sarbat was doing outreach in gurdwaras in and around London, using the “opt-in” for religious organization in the 2013 same-sex couples act to agitate for same-sex marriages in the gurdwaras. This I found fascinating, it felt weirdly like a radical proposition. I was reminded of how Sikh diasporas are not necessarily foldable into South Asian diasporic spaces and discourses. That was the film I was really trying to make.

**OS:** *I had once heard Janet Halley say that the task of queer theory is to understand what happens to queerness when it moves out of its home base of sexuality. Making queer theory*

*do methodological work, rather than being a mere description of sexual identity has been exemplified in the work of J.K. Gibson-Graham. The field classifications for TA by Duke University Press are queer theory, cultural studies, and American studies. Do you consider a working definition of queer theory useful, and how would that relate to American studies and cultural studies?*

**JKP:** *The Right to Maim* was awarded the best book of 2017 Alan Bray Award from the Modern Language Association's GLQ Caucus.<sup>24</sup> I was completely surprised as well as incredibly happy. I think my surprise indexed uncertainty that a book on U.S. imperialism, occupation, Palestine, militarization, the war on terror, would be embraced as a queer book.

I think there are strands of queer theory that function as un-interrogated versions of American Studies and my work has always asked questions about the okay-ness of this. I do not have and would not want a working definition of queerness—this seems ultimately like a form of disciplining and counter to the utopian impulses of theorizing. There are now queer scholarly projects that would have not been seen as part of the field twenty years ago, and that speaks to the morphing capacities of queerness. But what I think has characterized my work as a form of queer critique is the desire to account for settler subjectivities in relation to the imperial reach of U.S. academic knowledge production, and always assuming one is inside what one is critiquing, an immanent critique. I have also been very compelled by an ongoing dialogue with Maya Mikdashi. Maya keeps pointing out that queer archives in global south locations are not necessarily legible to queer theory proper if they have to be cycled through normative ideas about what constitutes sexual injury, asking why sexual injury that animates certain politics of queer resistance is distinct from the endemic violence of what we have called “Permanent War,” for example.<sup>25</sup>

**OS:** *You are located at a Women's and Gender Studies Department. In TA, you use the term “unhomed interdisciplinarity” as a way to describe your disciplinary (dis)locations.<sup>26</sup> In the postscript to the 2017 edition, drawing on Mel Chen, you use the expression “feral methodologies” to describe your attempts to escape captivity within disciplinary conventions.<sup>27</sup> Why do you want to do this both in terms of politics and the conventions of scholarship? I am asking this question because in law, for example, there has always been reparative gestures that critical legal theory has taken to critique the violence and exclusions of the discipline while remaining within the discipline. What I am really asking is the old-fashioned inside/ outside question: where do we locate ourselves as critical scholar-activists in disciplinary terms? I think this is also a question of significance for a project like TA where, in my reading, you were engaged in repairing queer theory's failures in order to make it contingently adequate for your task.*

**JKP:** Honestly, I am haphazardly interdisciplinary. An accident. I have undergraduate degrees in Economics, German, a Masters in Women's Studies, and a PhD from Ethnic Studies at Berkeley. I was never even vaguely trained, much less indoctrinated, into a discipline, so I didn't have to unlearn disciplinarity in order to understand interdisciplinarity—it just was, and is, for me. I don't think I experience the inside/ outside question, at least not ontologically, though I bumble into it all the time, through encounters with spaces very committed to method. An ex-lover once described me as a “thought-pusher.” I'm not sure it was meant as a compliment, but I like this idea of pushing thought around, it feels accurate.

Being right or wrong is not compelling terrain for me. I am more interested in what thought is, where it moves, and how it can be otherwise. Regardless of whether I agree or am aligned with that line or body of thought, I am curious about the force of it, the gospel of it, how it attracts and repels. What gets to be said that wasn't said before.

In gender studies, in my department, and as grad director, we focus on crafting affirmative interdisciplinary methodologies and approaches, so that instead of interdisciplinarity being a negation or negotiation of disciplines, it is instead that which is speculative, visionary, and creative. Even the notion of feral presumes something that is out of bounds, untamed, and thus in conflict with something regular, ordinary, or mandated. That is no longer how I encourage my students to think, because it puts them in a perpetually defensive position. Of course, the notion of method itself, however affirmative, in interdisciplinary contexts, is a covert attachment to neo-empiricism and aspirational scientific legitimation. Ultimately, I think we need to complicate if not refuse the demand to announce one's/ a method altogether, which is one reason why I propose "Tactics, Strategies, Logistics" in *TA*.

**OS:** *As you point out in no uncertain terms, your work in TA, and in general, has also been to show queer theory's complicities (as it comes out of the American academy) with imperialism, racism, Islamophobia, neoliberalism, and settler colonialism. In other words, it has been to provincialize queer theory. Would that be a correct reading? If so, would you have some recommended readings that might be a good place to begin? These could also be works that have influenced your thinking-writing-living.*

**JKP:** Well this speaks directly to your question about reparative relations between queer theory and U.S. empire. It has absolutely been about provincializing certain strands of queer theory, yes. I would be remiss if I didn't mention Paul Amar's work: *The Security Archipelago* was a game changer for me. And of course, Anjali Arondekar and Geeta Patel are two postcolonial South Asian studies scholars who have been insisting on being more forceful, creative, and intentional about relations between queer theory and Area Studies fields. More recently I have been persuaded by work in indigenous studies, particularly Jodi Byrd, that looks to dissimulate the proper objects of queer theory from the vantage of land, sovereignty, and inhuman entities. I'm looking forward to reading Khary Polk's book, *Contagions of Empire*, on black masculinity, the U.S. military, and empire, as well as the work of Global South trans studies scholars, Asli Zengen, Sima Shakhshari, and Howard Chiang. Petrus Liu's book *Queer Marxism in Two Chinas* is brilliant, and should be engaged more substantively. He asks, why is queer theory always presumed to originate in the West? And then does a fantastic reading of orientalism in Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, and builds a genealogy of queer theory that basically ignores the U.S. debates about homonationalism. Lui is part of an intriguing group of scholars developing what they call Queer Marxism, which, unlike earlier iterations of the partnering of Marxism and queerness, has race as a central analytic, but unlike queer of color critique, bypasses queer liberalism. Rahul Rao's recent book *Out of Time* does something similar, where he theorizes queer temporalities and modernities from the postcolonial peripheries.

This is a kind of necessary dialectical iteration, that the work on U.S. empire and homonationalism, *TA* included, also then becomes, because of the imperial circuits of U.S. academia, the dominant frame to talk about geopolitics. These newer books are

refusing or rerouting the debate about homonationalism, a frame which has been deployed as a statist theory—it's not a theory of the state, by the way! This goes back to my point about queer theory covertly acting as an area studies, as American Studies. For me the critique of queer theory has always functioned as an auto-critique, of the inevitable epistemic violence of theory. I don't let myself off the hook either.

**OS:** *Carrying on with the reparation/ rehabilitation dynamic, I'm interested in your thoughts on queer rights protections through the universalizing languages of international human rights law, anti-discrimination legislation, decriminalization of sodomy, privacy and marriage equality reforms/ plebiscites, that have almost become integral to the governmental rationalities of secularism and democracy. Lisa Duggan's critique of "homonormativity"—that you reference as a precursor to your conceptualization of homonationalism—is well-known. There are also well-articulated critiques of identity politics-based reform and liberal rights through law. Your chapter on the Lawrence judgment in TA demonstrates political allegiance to such critiques. However, there has also, on occasions been, a reparative or rehabilitative reconsideration of the rights question. I am reminded of Spivak's phrase that rights are those that we "cannot not want"; or Butler's rethink on the idea of universal human rights "as a future-oriented labor of cultural translation."<sup>28</sup> That human rights are pharmakon-like (both medicine and poison) has become axiomatic of any critical position. Yet, how does one work with rights under conditions where nation states legitimize their monopoly over violence through rights?*

**JKP:** Increasingly, I think that the pharmakon formulation attributed to human rights is also relevant to academia in the United States, whereby education and the upward mobility and respectable subjecthood it supposedly grants are the medicine and student debt is the poison—a paragon of liberal elitism stubbornly inscrutable to itself. So, I am not outside the critique of rights, nor of academia. It would be foolish not to acknowledge that one accrues cultural and pecuniary capital through the work of critique, to portend that somehow one is standing in some politically pure position. I have learned a lot from Critical University Studies, a field that argues that counter-carceral knowledge production sutures more so than disrupts the corporate university, and that the university has to be rethought—perhaps more precisely, thought of again—as a site of political contestation, dissent, and theft rather than legitimacy. So my concern is never isolated from human rights *per se* but more anchored in the exclusionary practices and politics of liberal inclusion. The most interesting human rights workers I have met—from NGO folks to lawyers to professional feminists and so on—understand best the paradoxes of the work they do. It's like summoning undercommons that stretch through these mutually reinforcing institutions that we are implicated in. All we can do is keep asking: where is it? How do we reach (for) it? Can we even imagine it much less generate a world free of these contradictions? Of course, contradictions are the dialectical productive force of change and with every encounter with contradiction that we embrace rather than deny, something moves.

The last point you mention about working through rights that are being used against you has specific resonance in Palestine (though hardly exclusively). There is no liberal "solution" to Palestine. Both the one state and two state solutions are pharmakons and can only be the starting point for liberation, not the end. In some sense Palestine is the fertile ground for

emblematic decolonizing movements—there is no recourse not only to rights, but what Arendt would call “the right to have rights,” no nation-state to appeal to, no international community safeguarding their human rights. So those are the spaces of the yet-to-be-known.

**OS:** Somewhat related to the rights question is the debate surrounding identity politics and affect/ assemblage politics that concern the closing chapters of TA where you argue for “a move from intersectionality to assemblage, an affective conglomeration that recognizes other contingencies of belonging.”<sup>29</sup> You have been criticized for arguing for a disengagement from intersectionality. You acknowledge in the 2017 postscript that you did not adequately engage with the important work of Black feminist (legal) scholarship on intersectionality. I feel that your argument that intersectionality recursively ossifies identity is an important cautionary remark, and becomes ever more pertinent at a time when claims to vulnerability are no longer the preserve of the powerless. Majoritarian and supremacist forms of victimhood drives the populist politics of hate in the United States, Western Europe, Israel, Australia, and in India. In the foreword to the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of TA, Tavia Nyong'o writes in this context: “I am convinced that Left Theory will need both identity politics and affective politics for a good while yet, in order to help us sort through the full spectrum of weaponized hate that confronts us and to better assess the corresponding resources of resistance and hope that are available to us.”<sup>30</sup> Do you think of intersectionality and assemblage as rival positions? If not, how are they related for you?

**JKP:** No, not at all, in fact I think not only do we need both affect and identity, as Tavia notes, but affect and identity need each other and are totally bound up together. I think of identity—perhaps more accurately identification—as the habituation of affect, a kind of record groove that one returns to over and over. And I do not subscribe to the orthodoxy that accords one theoretical tradition, conceptual tool, or field the explanatory capacity to map how power works in all situations everywhere and at all times. In the *Cyborg/Goddess* piece, I attempted to demonstrate how intersectionality and assemblage are actually convivial modes of thought, especially when assemblage is unmoored from its Deleuzian tendencies.<sup>31</sup> I love that assemblage no longer belongs to Deleuze! Amber Musser, Bhakti Shringapure, Alex Weheliye, Arun Saldanha, Amit Rai, they too pervert assemblage theory for the purposes of critical race, disability, and queer theory. I think—I hope—that in *The Right to Maim* analyses of intersectionality and assemblage are mutually reinforcing.

I have been deeply compelled by Jennifer Nash's super smart book *Black Feminism Reimagined*, where she lays out the institutional stakes of Black feminist thinking in the academy, and in gender studies more specifically. Nash's reparative redirect of what she calls the “intersectionality wars” is luminous and inspiring.<sup>32</sup> In some ways Nash revives the problematic “travelling theory” that haunted poststructuralist thought in the 80s and 90s, and ushers the wars from the reductive for or against argument to focus on the encounters of intersectionality.<sup>33</sup> Nash's analysis understands intersectionality as an historically produced heuristic and not an irreducible ontological given. Kara Keeling also makes this point beautifully in *The Witch's Flight*. (I think her new book *Queer Times, Black Futures* is also phenomenal and overall, her work is so generative for employing promiscuous reading and citational praxes). Intersections are always happening, but *how* they are happening is always changing. And affect is a big part of that, as, for one example, Kyla Schuller's book, *The Biopolitics of Feeling*, makes clear.

But I did make a mistake in *TA* by not accounting carefully for the genealogical strands of intersectional theorizing that I was discussing. I basically did the very thing that I critique, which is deploy intersectionality in what I later (in *The Right to Maim*) call a gestural citational practice, abstracted violently from any context.<sup>34</sup> It was a different time—2003–2005—when I was writing *TA*; it was still the “post-9/11” period. I was part of dialogues with transnational feminist and queer South Asian, Sikh, Arab-American, and Muslim scholars and activists. It was crisis theorizing—many of us were frantically struggling to contextualize Islamophobia, U.S. imperial relations to the Middle East, hate crimes against Sikhs, and the racialization of Muslims and Arab Americans for publics that were unexpectedly gung-ho about invading Afghanistan, and later Iraq. In that sense, I do not say anything in *TA* about the transnational travels of intersectionality that hadn’t already been articulated, much of it already or now published, by other feminist and queer theorists (I review this literature in *Cyborg/Goddess*). But I was naïve about institutional politics and failed to account for the precarious position of black feminists in the academy, both, as Nash notes, hyper-visible through the fetishization of intersectionality and yet massively underrepresented. Honestly, I wish I could have a “do-over.” It grieves me, because in hindsight I recognize the force of my mistake, and also because that engagement doesn’t represent my relationship to black feminist thought at all—I became a gender studies scholar because of Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Patricia Williams, and of course Kimberlé Crenshaw’s work was among the first I read when I was doing a Masters in Women’s Studies in 1992. I do agree with recent critiques from Tiffany Lebatho King and Their A. Pickens that I did a disservice to black feminist studies.

As feminist and queer theorists, especially as we are not white, male, so forth, I believe we have to give ourselves permission to be creative, suggest the unsayable, reach for new lexicons. I read all the dead white men in graduate school in an Ethnic Studies program, so I was not educated with a prohibition on certain theorists, literatures, and so on. That for me is the beauty of interdisciplinarity, but with that comes the responsibility to own one’s tracks. At the end of the day we all still have to account for our institutional locations.

**OS:** *You’ve written a lot about the relationship between homonationalism and Israeli pinkwashing. Your 2010 piece in the Guardian was my first introduction to the latter term that I don’t think was around when TA came out (or was it?).<sup>35</sup> Can you tell us how and why you got interested in Israel/ Palestine? Your critique of Israeli pinkwashing has also invited threats of censorship.<sup>36</sup> Works by Scott Long and Jin Haritaworn (and their colleagues) have also been censored for their critique of western-styled imperialist gay rights activism.<sup>37</sup> Is the impulse to censor driven by a fear of queer critique?*

**JKP:** I first went to Palestine in 1987, somewhat accidentally—that part is a tedious story. I was in Jerusalem when the first intifada started. I was stunned at the multitude of militarized apparatuses everywhere. Nevertheless, at that time movement was more loosely confined and there was traffic between West and East Jerusalem, to Bethlehem, to Jaffa. Jerusalem imprinted me hard, the old city in particular, the deep religious crossroads. The Muslim quarter in the Old City and the eastern part of Jerusalem more generally were really vibrant, sprawling ecosystems of activism, organizing, and resistance—it was spirited. I went back the following year after I finished my undergrad degree and had more time to visit the West Bank and was increasingly disturbed by what was going on.

I grew up in an all-white community where the outliers—a Black family, a Jewish family, and our Sikh family—were conjoined in Otherness, so seeing the violence of the Israeli state, grappling with it and coming to consciousness was a big shift for me.

When *TA* came out in 2007, there was a small section on queer conditional solidarity for Palestine that seemed informed by the logics of homonationalism, the production of a homophobic other that was not fit to determine its own sovereignty. During the 2008–2009 war on Gaza, I started getting involved with queer Palestinians who were observing what they called pinkwashing and their analyses really challenged me to start connecting the dots between the United States and Israel as co-beneficiaries of homonationalism. Pinkwashing was a concept being used by organizers to address the erasures of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, I think as early as 2005, maybe? We hosted Haneen Maikey (director of al-Qaws) and Ghadir Shafie (director of Aswat) at the Audre Lorde Project in 2011—they were incredible—and then went on the LGBTQ delegation to Palestine that Sarah Schulman organized. Those years entailed a steep learning curve for me around queer transnational organizing and the BDS (boycott divestment sanctions) movement. If someone had told me at that time that 10 years later, I'd be taking Arabic classes and working on a book-length project on Palestine and disability, I would have thought, impossible. I had plans for other, very distinctly ethnic/diaspora/American studies projects. So, this trajectory snuck up on me, in a very organic manner I feel, like how fundamental subjective shifts happen when one isn't watching.

There was and continues to be a fair amount of backlash around the pinkwashing debates. I went through a bizarre situation in Berlin in 2010, there were protests at a talk I gave at Humboldt University—I hear I am *persona non-gratis* in Berlin, where the pinkwashing wars have completely factionalized queer communities. But the harassment and censorship I have experienced most has been since 2016 in response to the argument about maiming and attendant critiques of the Israeli settler colonial occupation. Having said that, the vitriol directed towards me is very pointedly furious that a queer woman of color could have any credibility whatsoever as a scholar. An interesting thing is also happening with *TA*, which seems to become more controversial with age, as the context of 9/11 has become naturalized, more normalized. Islamophobia is a very routine and rather unremarkable form of racism, embedded in the languages and practices of surveillance and counterterrorism so as to become commonsensical. I appreciate all the work that has been done to place 9/11 in the longue durée of counterterrorist technologies and racial surveillance, and to critique the 9/11 industry. But sometimes it's as if 9/11 never happened. Other folks have misread the book as advocating an absolutist politics of anti-normativity, and accused me of being against improving working conditions for trans people in the military, for example. I do not approach the nation-state as an either/or proposition and that's where assemblage is important to me as a heuristic.

**OS:** *Your recent book, The Right to Maim, is also about Israel/ Palestine, and brings queer theory into conversation with crip theory. Can you say how the project in TA gets carried forward in this new work?*

**JKP:** A friend recently told me that the arc of the two books is a deep and ongoing dive into the brutal humanism that undergirds liberalism. I think there is an unflinching examination of the violence of human rights in both books. I also think together, and

with the third book in progress (though not huge amount of progress!), there is a kind of trilogy emerging as a composite of transnational methodology, moving from deconstructing American empire from the war on terror to looking at the transnational manifestations of mutually reinforcing settler colonial rule between the United States and Israel to the third project, which will shift away from tracing state violence as in the first two books and towards interstitial and ontological resistances. *TA* and *The Right to Maim* are very much analyses at the scale of biopolitics and therefore not about individuals or subjectivity or lived experiences, but rather about “dividuals” and population. In some sense both books ask: how does a population of dividuals come into being? Both books also keep the performative repetition of state violence as spectacle in play. Last summer, when I was presenting a seminar on *The Right to Maim* at Birzeit University in the West Bank, folks were really interested in the complication of biopolitical theorizing through maiming. But the elaboration of Israeli state violence continues the violence itself, insofar as such elaborations—while it’s absolutely important to understand how violence works—reassert the ideological configurations that make the violence possible in the first place; that is, the power of Israel as an unrelenting violence producing machine. It intentionally *tutors* populations into a sense of value or valuelessness—this is something I realized from Nikhil Pal Singh’s latest work. So I understand *The Right to Maim* to be participating in the spectacles of both U.S. and Israeli state violence, and I would like to—actually it is my plan—to shift scales in the third book towards the living of debility and capacity in Palestine, and, drawing from Saidiya Hartman’s definition of fabulation, the interfacing of history and speculation.

**OS:** *The writing of The Right to Maim took place under difficult health circumstances for you: you underwent a major surgery. Was your experience of disability (if a surgery and its recuperative aftermath can be called that) and writing about debility speak to each other?*

**JKP:** I’m actually more familiar with the ebb and flow of chronicity—depression, chronic pain, migraines, and managing these conditions over the last two decades, often all at once, led me to thinking about disability and debility. The surgery—which, you know, had been in the works for a while because I was diagnosed with MVP (mitral valve prolapse) in my early 30s—was narratively produced by the medical discourse as a very contained event, in the way that my heart valve was pronounced “fixed.” Imagine, I was going to be fixed! It felt a lot less like disability than the chronicity increasingly embedded in my day-to-day life, which led me to think a lot about not only biopolitical differences between disability and debility but also if or when and under which circumstances do phenomenological distinctions start to vanish. And what can we learn from these vanishing points.

Open-heart surgery has been and is hard, I won’t pretend otherwise. Three years later my valve is doing great but the trauma of the surgery itself is seemingly endless, and has wrought new symptoms, new health issues. But one thing you learn with such a major health event is that bodies are incredibly vulnerable and yet remarkably resilient. And there was a lot of community support and care. I fell in love with my friends all over again. I did also relish meditating on the metaphors of a broken heart, heart of gold, speaking from the heart, big heart—there are so many—as an affirmation that the changes my heart underwent were as much affective and psychic as biophysical.

**OS:** What an affective note on which to bring this to a close. Thank you Jasbir for taking out time for this conversation and for trusting me (and our readers) with your words and ideas.

**JKP:** Thanks, Oishik. Much gratitude for your generative engagement.

## NOTES

1. Some portions of this introduction draw on Oishik Sircar, "New Queer Politics in the New India: Notes on Failure and Stuckness in a Negative Moment," *Unbound: Harvard Journal of the Legal Left* 11 (2017): 1–36
2. Jasbir K. Puar, "To Be Gay and Racist Is No Anomaly," *Guardian*, June 2, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/jun/02/gay-lesbian-islamophobia>
3. Jasbir K. Puar, "Homonationalism as Assemblage: Viral Travels, Affective Sexualities," in *New Intimacies, Old Desires: Law, Culture and Queer Politics in Neoliberal Times*, ed. Oishik Sircar and Dipika Jain (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2017), 3.
4. Quoted in Sarah Schulman, *Israel/ Palestine and the Queer International* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 128–29.
5. Benjamin Doherty, "Israel Lobby Group Iran 180 'Sodomizes' Ahmadinejad Effigy with Nuke at San Francisco Pride," *The Electronic Intifada*, June 11, 2012, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/benjamin-doherty/israel-lobby-group-iran180-sodomizes-ahmadinejad-effigy-nuke-san-francisco>; Scott Long, "The Rape of the Jock: A-jad, Manhood, and 'Iran 180,'" *A Paper Bird*, June 13, 2012, <https://paper-bird.net/2012/06/13/the-rape-of-the-jock-a-jad-manhood-and-iran-180/>
6. Scott Long, "Unbearable Witness: How Western Activists (Mis)Recognize Sexuality in Iran," *Contemporary Politics* 15, no. 1 (March 2009): 119–36.
7. See generally, Joseph A. Massad, "Reorienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World," *Public Culture* 14, no. 2 (2002): 361–85.
8. Obergefell v. Hodges, 135 S. Ct. 2584 (2015), [http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/14-556\\_3204.pdf](http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/14-556_3204.pdf)
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10. Suresh Kumar Koushal vs Naz Foundation (December 11, 2013), <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/158730926/>; Naz Foundation vs Govt. of Delhi (July 2, 2009), <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/100472805/>
11. Stuti Shukla, "Mixed Response to Cong Promise to Decriminalize Homosexuality," *The Indian Express*, March 27, 2014, <http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/mixedresponse-to-cong-promise-to-decriminalise-homosexuality/>
12. See Arundhati Roy, "Mr Chidambaram's War," *Outlook*, November 9, 2009, <http://www.outlookindia.com/article/mr-chidambarams-war/262519>
13. In making this argument, I don't mean to suggest that queerness is urban and ethnicity or race is rural. My intention is to emphasize on how democratic state-craft works through a certain kind of biopolitical logic, in which management of marginalized populations are carried out by articulating progressivism in favor of one to mask violence against the other. Even as I say this, I am aware that both queerness and ethnicity are intersectional and co-constitutive categories. I thank Rahul Rao for helping me articulate this idea.
14. On the limitations and possibilities of the usage of trans (with or without an asterisk) as an umbrella term for nonbinary sexualities, especially in non-Western contexts, see generally, Avery Tompkins, "Asterisk," *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 1–2 (May 2014): 26–27; Aniruddha Dutta and Raina Roy, "Decolonizing Transgender in India: Some Reflections," *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (August 2014): 320–37.
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17. Sheshtha Das and Aijaz Ahmad Bund, "The Homonationalist Agenda of 'Good' Queers Who Love the Nation-State," *The Wire*, February 13, 2020, <https://thewire.in/igbtqia/homonationalism-india-sedition>.
18. Oishik Sircar, "Postcolonial Liberalism's Double Binds," *Critical Legal Thinking*, June 19, 2020, <https://criticallegalthinking.com/2020/06/19/postcolonial-liberalisms-double-binds/>
19. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016)

20. Povinelli understands “otherwise” as “forms of life that are at odds with dominant, and dominating, modes of being.” Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *Routes/Worlds*, 27 *E-Flux J.*, September 2011, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/routesworlds/>
21. Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anti-Colonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).
22. Zoë H. Wool and Julie Livingstone, “Collateral Afterworlds: An Introduction,” *Social Text* 35, no. 130 (2017): 1–15.
23. The Audre Lorde Project, “Open Letter to LGBTST Communities Opposing War,” January 26, 2003. <https://alp.org/open-letter-lgbtst-communities-opposing-war>
24. In 2018, *The Right to Maim* also won the Alison Piepmeier Book Prize, awarded by the National Women’s Studies Association in Chicago.
25. Maya Mikdash and Jasbir K. Puar, “Queer Theory and Permanent War,” *GLQ* 22, no. 2 (April 2016): 215–22.
26. Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), xvi.
27. *Ibid.*, 229.
28. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 45–46; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2007), xvii.
29. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages* (2007), 211.
30. Tavia Nyong’o, “Foreword to 2017 Edition,” in Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), xv (emphasis original).
31. Jasbir K. Puar, “I Would Rather Be a Cyborg Than a Goddess”: Becoming Intersectional in Assemblage Theory,” *PhiloSOPHIA* 2, no. 1 (2012): 49–66.
32. Jennifer C. Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 33.
33. Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 226–47.
34. Puar, *Right to Maim*, 176.
35. Jasbir K. Puar, “Israel’s Gay Propaganda War,” *Guardian*, July 1, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/jul/01/israels-gay-propaganda-war>
36. Jasbir K. Puar, “Citation and Censorship: The Politics of Talking About the Sexual Politics of Israel,” *Feminist Legal Studies* 19 (2011): 133–42.
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