

This article was downloaded by: [University of California, Berkeley]
On: 17 January 2014, At: 21:44
Publisher: Routledge
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954
Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH,
UK



International Feminist Journal of Politics

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rfjp20>

Fatima El-Tayeb. European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe

Johanna Rothe^a

^a University of California, Santa Cruz, USA

Published online: 17 Dec 2013.

To cite this article: Johanna Rothe (2013) Fatima El-Tayeb. European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 15:4, 572-574, DOI: [10.1080/14616742.2013.841562](https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2013.841562)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2013.841562>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly

forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

and *Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*. She is completing a book manuscript titled *Queering the Transnational Filipina Body: Gendered and Sexual Nationalisms in the Filipino Diaspora*.

Reference

McClintock, A. 1995. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*. London: Routledge.

Fatima El-Tayeb. *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-8166-7016-1.

European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe is a book about cultural practice, identity and resistance among racialized minorities in continental Western Europe. Fatima El-Tayeb documents a wide selection of minoritarian practices that she theorizes as a 'queering' of ethnicity. 'Queer' here is understood as a verb, to describe how racialized Europeans challenge the rigid construction of Europe as white and (post) Christian. By engaging 'queer' with Caribbean theories of creolization, El-Tayeb theorizes 'queering ethnicity' as a set of wide-ranging practices that involve excavating counter-historical memory, contesting spatial governance and re-articulating identities and communities. Each of the book's four main chapters juxtaposes a different manifestation of the dominant discourses of Europe with a different set of minoritarian practices of resistance.

In the dominant discourse, Europe is 'raceless': there is no racialization in Europe. Those who are visually marked as Other are externalized as not-European. Within this discourse, the use of the concept 'migrant', for instance, relies on the spatial-temporal imaginary of migration in order to externalize racial minorities as non-European, as 'eternal newcomers, forever suspended in time, forever "just arriving"', even when many so-called migrants have lived in the same structurally impoverished urban neighborhoods for their entire lives (p. xxv). El-Tayeb discusses many examples of how racialized Europeans make visible, challenge and thereby queer this racialized spatial-historical imagination of Europe. For instance, she writes about how disenfranchised minority youth use hip-hop to claim a stake in their neighborhoods, construct trans-local (i.e. between poor minority neighborhoods across Europe) solidarity, and articulate connections between colonialism, the Nazi regime and police violence against their communities today.

El-Tayeb frequently uses the term 'minorities' to counter the externalization that is performed in dominant discourse. Minorities, unlike migrants, are fully in the 'here and now'. But the value of the concept is also its limitation: 'minority' reaffirms a nation-centered epistemology and is not adequate to theorize the connections that are being forged across ethnic and national

lines. El-Tayeb therefore proposes the concept of diaspora as a better starting point. The theories of diaspora that are currently used in European migration studies, however, tend to rely on notions of a shared homeland and descent-based ethnicity, which does not speak to the ways that many racialized Europeans construct communities and political aspirations. El-Tayeb argues convincingly that African diaspora discourses are able to speak to the situation of racialized Europeans more meaningfully.

If scholars of European migration recognize the relevance of African diaspora studies to their subject, they only follow the insights that are reflected in racialized Europeans' legacies of resistance – legacies that are full of appropriations of African American culture in particular. As the first two chapters show, US women of color feminism and hip-hop both played important roles in facilitating the articulation of a European minority identity. Hip-hop in fact became a common language, a 'diasporic lingua franca', for disenfranchised minority youth from urban centers across Europe (p. 29). While the movement of ideas from America to Europe is thus fairly evident, El-Tayeb insists that the value of cultural borrowing and translation does not accrue only in one direction. This point becomes clear in her intriguing sketch of some of the openings that an engagement with the European experience of racialization creates in African diasporic theorizations of Africanness, blackness and modernity.

Cultural practices such as poetry, hip-hop, performance, radio and TV production are the main forms through which European minorities queer ethnicity, but El-Tayeb demonstrates that conventional forms of political activity come into play too, as exemplified by the figure of Danish Muslim socialist feminist politician Asmaa Abdol-Hamid. It is a great strength of *European Others* that its archive is not delineated by the compartmentalization of culture as distinct from politics as distinct from history as distinct from activism, because the definition of these domains is itself embedded in the construction of a normative European subject.

European Others is a book with impressive research breadth and analytical force. I hope that it will circulate widely across many fields and beyond them, inspiring the critical shifts that it calls for. It contributes to the heterogeneous movement to queer ethnicity by documenting its sometimes fleeting and dispersed moments and by theorizing them as a dynamic whole. On the way it produces many openings for relating practices and discourses of resistance across national, regional and disciplinary boundaries.

For Western Europe, *European Others* also helps frame a more comprehensive understanding of the 'murderous inclusions' that are scrutinized in this special issue, where LGBTQ citizenship works hand in hand with state violence. These murderous inclusions often deploy dichotomous stereotypes of deserving LGBTQ citizens at home in a progressive Europe vs. undeserving racial intruders encumbered by a backward culture. El-Tayeb's study demonstrates that this racialized logic of inclusion and exclusion is not an aberrant contradiction but instead is part of the long-lasting racialization of 'Europe'

that has already been met by a dynamic legacy of resistance. For those joining now to oppose the murderous inclusion model of LGBTQ politics, whether it is from a place of LGBTQ identification or not, it is important to be accountable to the legacies of resistance documented and theorized in *European Others*.

Johanna Rothe
University of California, Santa Cruz, USA
Email: jrothe@ucsc.edu

© Johanna Rothe 2013

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2013.841562>

Notes on contributor

Johanna Rothe is a doctoral candidate in History of Consciousness with a designated emphasis in Feminist Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her dissertation examines how Freudian psychoanalysis and the politics of nationality in Austria (1880–1918) have normalized an understanding of the self that still echoes in contemporary liberal imaginings of sexuality and race.

Dean Spade. *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2011. ISBN 978-0-89608-796-5.

A timely and important critique, Dean Spade's *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law* provides an insightful analysis of why legal reform has consistently failed to bring about substantive equality for oppressed people. Outlining the contours of a critical trans politics that 'imagines and demands an end to prisons, homelessness, landlords, bosses, immigration enforcement, poverty, and wealth' (pp. 68–9), *Normal Life* pushes back against the neoliberal turn toward marriage rights, military participation and hate crimes legislation that has dominated mainstream lesbian and gay political discourse. Instead, Spade shows that in order to truly transform the life chances of trans people it is necessary to develop a political movement that is committed to mass mobilization, the leadership of those most impacted, coalitional politics and challenging rather than seeking inclusion within the violent institutions of the state.

One of *Normal Life*'s greatest contributions is its clear and compelling analysis of power. Spade challenges activists to respond to the ways that power actually works, not to the narratives that the law constructs about power. He shows that legal reforms like hate crime or anti-discrimination measures are rooted in a perpetrator-victim model of power that misunderstands systemic inequalities as the result of individual acts of violence or exclusion. By