

Editorial: The Intersectionality of Hate

Sara Matthews is Associate Professor in the Department of Global Studies, Wilfrid Laurier University. Her research and teaching are interdisciplinary and consider the dynamics of violence, war, and social conflict in relation to nation building. In addition to her academic work, Sara curates aesthetic projects that archive visual encounters with legacies of war and social trauma. Her critical writing has appeared in PUBLIC, Fuse Magazine, and in exhibition essays for the Ottawa Art Gallery, YYZ, the Robert Langen Gallery, and as a blog for Gallery TPW.

Nathan Rambukkana is an Assistant Professor in Communication Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University, in Waterloo Canada. His work centres the study of discourse, politics, and identities, and his research addresses topics such as the “alt-right;” hashtag publics; digital, haptic, and robotic intimacies; intimate privilege; and non/monogamy in the public sphere. He is the author of *Fraught Intimacies: Non/Monogamy in the Public Sphere* (UBC Press, 2015), and the editor of *Hashtag Publics: The Power and Politics of Discursive Networks* (Peter Lang, 2015) and of *Intersectional Automations: Robots, AI, Algorithms, and Equity* (2021). Web: <http://complexsingularities.net>

In the late summer of 2017, we released a call for interest in a thematic cluster in Atlantis that addresses the rise of “alt-right” discourse, the attendant backlash against social justice movements, and resistances. Aiming to take up the formation of alt-right movements from a social justice perspective, we sought contributions that theorized the “intersectionality of hate.” In a *Daily Intelligencer* article dated November 6, 2016, Rembert Browne coined this term as a way to frame and analyze how the alt-right drew together various populist hatreds in support of then-Presidential candidate Donald J. Trump. Browne’s piece was published the day after Trump’s election. Now, almost two years into a Trump administration, Browne’s observations remain prescient: hatreds are neither developed, nor expressed, as isolated happenings attributed to the actions of the few. Indeed, the ontology of hate feeds on and into the very structures and systems of institutional power that interpellate the citizen subject of the nation.

What does it mean, then, to think about the “intersectionality of hate” with regard to the political work of theorizing what Puar (2012) calls the “mutually co-constitutive forces of race, class, sex, gender and nation” (49)? One approach is to analyse how far-right affinity politics work the energies, synergies, and discourses of social justice politics but for opposite interests and inverted motivations. Since the US election, the North American alt-right movement continues to provide a politics of shared identity to White Supremacists/Nationalists and others who identify racial justice as reverse-racism; to Men’s Rights Activists (MRAs) who understand feminisms as an endangerment to men; to precarious workers sold on the false consciousness of “immigrants taking their jobs”; and to old-school gamers who encounter the “new games journalism” and female-identified

designers as a conspiracy to “ruin gaming.” The rise of the far-right—re-packaged, rebranded, and sanitized as the alt-right—is backlash politics writ large. It is what happens when ensconced privilege is displaced and traditional power is questioned or eroded.

Since our original call for papers, much has occurred in the Canadian context to concretize and perpetuate the intersectionality of hate. The conditions for queer, non-binary, and racialized scholars in our shared communities are acute. In the face of this structural, symbolic, and subjective violence, it may be that an expectation for scholarly analysis is too soon. It is also the case, in the current violence of the public sphere, that to risk resistance is to risk one’s physical, intellectual, and emotional being in very real ways. We are nevertheless pleased to present, in this issue of *Atlantis*, two papers that respond to our theme.

Rabia Mir’s creative submission takes the form of a personal address—directly to her professors. It is a searing critique of the ways in which the academy reproduces hatreds through its structures, processes, and actors. Indeed, the institution of the neoliberal academy is deeply embedded in both the founding and contemporary myths of the Canadian settler nation, including those of imperialism, white supremacy, and Islamophobia. Mir’s choice to adapt the genre of the letter as critique is astute. Written from the perspective of a student to her teachers, it is an address that cannot be refused because it places a demand upon the recipient to listen and respond. This insistence calls for more than just an answer but rather a recognition of what is written and by whom. Further, it demands an ethics of witnessing, which includes the responsibility to understand oneself as implicated in how the pedagogical dynamics between teachers and students might both express and repeat the institutionalization of social hatreds within the academy. While her letter draws on the personal, Mir’s narrative expresses subjectivity as embedded within the systemic, symbolic, and subjective violences of the nation state in its reproduction of the normative citizen subject. The university, she maintains, is not outside of these relations and her

insistence is that those who benefit from its structures recognize this fact and work toward a critical conscientiousness rather than toward innocence. Only then, she implies, can the work of education take place.

Tanner Mirrlees focuses his analysis on the discourse of so-called cultural Marxism, asking how it is articulated and adapted by the alt-right for various political purposes. To do so, he investigates the ways in which the alt-right produces and circulates cultural Marxism as a “conspiratorial discourse” that binds together various populist and fascist factions into what he names as an ordered “instrument of intersectional hate.” Building on Rembert Browne’s argument that a Trump victory was achieved by making hate intersectional, Mirrlees examines the ways in which “the alt-right wields ‘cultural Marxism’ to advance a white, patriarchal, and Christian conservative vision of America and foment a racist, sexist, classist, xenophobic, and violent backlash against gains made by the individuals and groups it constructs as cultural-Marxist threats to and enemies to its ‘alt-America.’” Mirrlees’ intellectual work is invaluable to a contemporary understanding of how the alt-right works—both from the macro-level understanding of its key underpinnings and convergences as well as the micro-level of its use as a tool of intersectional hate in specific national contexts. One of Mirrlees’ key insights is his articulation of cultural Marxism as a conspiracy theory of power that, although totalizing in its attempt to pigeonhole social movements that challenge white conservative Christian Americans, can nevertheless be easily debunked. Mirrlees concludes his article with a tandem appeal to that made by Mir: the “mirror” held up by the alt-right offers social movement activists, Marxists, and scholars an opportunity to counter the projection of intersectional hatreds and move towards new forms of resistance and sociality.

References

Rembert Browne, November 9, 2016, “How Trump Made Hate Intersectional,” *Daily Intelligencer*, <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2016/11/how-trump->

made-hate-intersectional.html

Puar, J.K. 2012. "I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess': Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory." *philoSOPHIA* 2(1):49-66.