Introduction

Queer and Trans Life

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What does queer and trans anthropology have to say about the future? What does it have to say about queer and trans life? How do anthropological sensibilities engage crisis as an abstraction that is lived in sexual and gender non-conformity as much as the ground of queer and trans analytics, lives and futures? This book takes up futures, lives and crises of anthropologies on the margins as part of queer and trans chronopolitics as much as fundamental anthropological problematics. Margins are always under pressure in times of social, economic and political upheaval: they become frontlines where precarities intersect and deepen, and where the contours of collectivities and relational intensities are redrawn. Margins are temporal too: they appear unexpectedly; surprisingly, they endure. Margins also vanish in the aftermath of sudden critical events or processes of slower wearing out. In these predicaments, queer and trans interrupt straight time and normative visions of the future. Queer and trans endeavours in anthropology connect to dovetailing scholarly and political labours and longings that have historically brought into relief situated experiences of sexual dissidence and gender variance, and their analytics. Always already there, always already othered, queer and trans anthropological scholarship has propelled critiques of minoritized and minorizing moves whilst cultivating analytical attention and commitments to queer and trans worldmaking in the everyday. Queer and trans anthropological engagements bring into relief the normativities that organize the social and the temporal, highlighting

how queer and trans vitalities nestle in the folds of systemic and spectacular attrition (Edelman 2021; Snorton and Haritaworn 2022). Margins in crisis, in this view, are where the future-making of the multitude is crafted; where the hetero-colonizing moves are being challenged in struggles for the establishment of the conditions of possibility of queer and trans futures and liberation (Alqaisiya 2023). We insist on *queer and trans* – as articulation and conjunction, a sphere of possibilities and orientations, rather than categorical definitions, though we are mindful that these terms when brought together or kept apart have historically also marked frictions as much as homecomings (Prosser 1998; Rosenberg 2021). From these vantage points, 'life' operates as a concept-metaphor that speaks to the vulnerabilities that come from living on the edge as much as to the relational entanglements of interpretative and affective openness and longing. Poet Ocean Vuong evokes the suturing of life, crisis and futures in a syntactical device that is at once an unmarked conjunction and an opening. In a compelling scene in Vuong's epistolary novel, *On Earth We Are Briefly Gorgeous*, the act of savouring a piece of candy long forgotten and then found in a pocket unleashes a multisensorial recollection – the remembrance of a lover lost to prescription opioids, a car crash and structural inequities; Vuong writes:

> I am not with you because I am at war with everything but you.
> A person beside a person inside a life. That's called parataxis.
> That's called the future.
> We're almost there.
> I am not telling you a story so much as a shipwreck – the pieces floating, finally legible. (2020: 190)

The contributions gathered in this book speak to the relational intensities, conceptual challenges and poetics inherent in crafting accounts of life as it comes into view; pieces floating and at times *almost* coalescing into futures, raising questions and opening up new interpretations. The book opens up to the ground where queer and trans life and analytics unfold, as anthropological futures are conjured up and brought into being. Anthropology is thus unmoored from the strictures of normative disciplinary histories and propelled towards queer sensibilities (Boyce, Engebretsen and Posocco 2018) and gender and sexual indeterminacies (Gonzalez-Polledo 2023; Weston 1998). Thus, restaging the conjunction of *queer and trans* through the lens of Vuong's parataxis, the relationship predicated by the conjunction 'and' produces legibility and blurring, almost like the floating pieces that appear in the novel, forming a legible shape in a

certain time and place without imposing a clear form, hierarchy and structure. The sense of interpretation and besideness is particularly generative in reconfiguring normative and identity-oriented iterations of 'LGBTQ' and anthropological theory.

Our contributors offer a pedagogy and an ethics of listening and learning, where queer and trans life reconfigure normative iterations of anthropological theory and where queer and trans worldmaking can thrive. Queer and trans anthropology scholarship in Europe has minimal institutional support and is largely lacking formal institutionalization. Despite these challenges, it is a burgeoning terrain of research endeavours that is often supported by interdisciplinary scholarly efforts, academic teaching and research arrangements that have welcomed and nurtured anthropological work. In turn, queer and trans anthropology is widely read and cited across disciplines, so it is an expansive and expanding field built with meagre resources but extensive and growing scholarly and activist commitment. This volume showcases the work of contributors who have followed various routes to queer anthropological scholarship and who de facto do not have a single disciplinary identity. We focus on a shared framing of the contextual and conceptual scope whilst also reflecting different positions on multiple problematics, variously drawing on ethnography, or emphasizing theory and poetics as forms of anthropological knowledge-making. As we have consistently argued (Boyce, Gonzalez-Polledo and Posocco 2019; McCallum, Posocco and Fotta 2023), queer anthropology should not be relegated to the status of a 'subfield': feminist and queer sensibilities have been at the heart of anthropological scholarship from the inception of the discipline, and their positioning at the margins – and any related minoritizing arguments – should be unambiguously and vigorously contested. The vernacular inflection of our work and the ways we construct queer anthropology's historiography is nevertheless a fundamental and distinctive aspect of the volume. Rather than formulaic retelling or problematic amalgamation of what is often assumed to be a static field – queer anthropology – oriented in relation to North American-centred disciplinary histories, we offer a critically situated re-narration and re-worlding, which, in this particular reiteration, opens up the field to remake it 'queer *and* trans', so as to address the pressing questions of this embattled present whilst also tackling and problematizing 'Europe' as a contested geopolitical location of our work.

Anthropological knowledge practices have addressed futures in interesting and productive ways. For example, Fischer stresses

the experimental and speculative relational capacities of anthropological knowledge (2009). Fischer recognizes that anthropological endeavours have historically appealed to an ethics of extended contemporaneity – that is, of '*in the meantime*' modes of concern (Fischer 2018). This vantage point has enabled anthropological accounting that has tracked biopolitics and bioecologies of extraction and capture, whilst at the same time engendering responsiveness towards 'the always unfinishedness of emergent forms of life' (Fischer 2018: 276, see also Biehl and Locke 2010). In turn, Povinelli (2016) highlights how 'geontopower' regulates the distinction between life and nonlife, often co-opting antinormativity by incorporating it. Extended contemporaneity – 'for the time being' – then, is a temporality of struggle that unfolds and extends into what lies ahead. Recent interventions in the anthropology of the future have focused on practices of future-making as they are mobilized in social practice. In this account, the future is composite, as it is animated in cultural systems through specific operations tied to anticipation, expectation, speculation, potentiality, hope and destiny (Bryant and Knight 2019). These temporal orientations are, for Bryant and Knight, indicative of a teleological thrust and sensibility at the heart of anthropological work. Whilst the invitation to examine modes of future-making is compelling, the chapters in this volume challenge the primacy of teleological future-making, tying teleologies fundamentally to coloniality and the normative futurity that is part of the broader panoply of chrononormativities. Anthropology provides productive antecedents in this respect, and Fabian's arguments concerning anthropology's own temporal systems in *Time and the Other* (1983) continue to sustain critical engagements with the anthropological project and the allochronisms – that is, the denials of coevalness – associated with it. In this meta-critique of anthropological worldmaking, we also return to Alfred Gell's nuanced, influential work on time (1992), highlighting the queering effects and political resonances that ensue out of recontextualization. Where Vuong (2020) mines parataxis to indicate relation without explicit coordination or subordination, Gell places emphasis on 'time adverbials' and the nexus between 'future tenses and "irrealis" modal constructions' (Gell 1992: 126). For Gell, philosophical arguments divide into two clusters: A Series positions that frame time as dynamic and change as resulting from 'becoming', and B Series positions that frame time as not dynamic so that past, present and future are gained and lost in the day-to-day (Gell 1992, Chapters 17 and 18; see also Kirtsoglou and Simpson 2020). Parataxis opens up the planes of becoming and the multitemporality

of the now to anthropological worldmaking. This conceptual move does not equate to a refusal of futurity as an overarching theme. Rather, it grounds the fashioning of ethnographic knowledge as built on accumulated understandings, over time. Strathern, for example, has conceived of analytic attention to overlapping recursivities as one of the values of ethnography (Strathern 1999). This is not to frame the past as a precursive site but as a shifting empirical and ontological locus that continuously oscillates and at times accrues into what appear as accumulated sets of 'facts'. As such, the book is not organized around forward-moving or fully retroactive orientations, but rather aims to conjure framings of futurity that pull in other, shifting, temporal pathways.

Acknowledging that crises – whether figured as an unexpected flashpoint, recurrent disruption or the longue durée of coloniality and extraction – are modes of living and surviving, this volume explores how queer and trans futurities connect to temporal frames caught up in individual and collective labours of survival, care and transformation (Gonzalez-Polledo 2017; see also Ramberg 2016). In turn, while drawing inspiration from anthropological analyses of temporality, queer and trans ethnography has nevertheless moved towards autofiction to challenge methodologically the conventions of writing ethnography still present in the discipline. Queer and trans methodologies and autofiction provide a rich archive and conceptual repertoire for interrogating uncertain futures. As Rosenberg notes (2021), Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* (1993) – the groundbreaking novel about gender nonconforming coming of age in working – class, proto-queer, preneoliberalism USA – can be reappraised as a closely observed chronicle of trans life in the shadows of aggressive deindustrialization and the rapid rise and consolidation of the carceral state (Rosenberg 2021). In turn, Mikdashi observes that, 'to live in expectation of continuity – to experience "crisis" as a bounded event – is something few in the world enjoy … . That blissful, unthought expectation … is inextricable from the pain of others' (2022: xii). This observation is critical for articulating the profound geopolitical significance of how, where and for whom 'crisis' becomes recognized as such. From these perspectives, queer and trans archives are repositories where a range of genre-defying interventions construct theories of utopia and dystopia as often combined analytics that work towards an understanding of the 'chokepoints' – in Rosenberg's incisively and suggestive expression (2021: 266) – that can move us against systems and technologies of capture and towards liberation (Feinberg 1998).

At the present time, an acceleration of deep uncertainties in the economy and social relations is bringing forth new chronobiopolitical arrangements reflected in how the past structures a new logic of 'inheritance', to use Elizabeth Freeman's (2010) formulation, from which political futures are conjured up. Indeed, as Jane Guyer puts it, the intensification and compounding nature of crisis provides a new awareness that crises are themselves a mode of punctuation, a break in an enduring mode of existence that positions dimensions of social life as eventful and cyclical, rather than cumulative, and in so doing 'fills the gap between an instantaneous present and an altogether different distant future' (Guyer 2007: 417). Crisis, in this sense, holds the potential to break away from the loop of 'endless growth' and from heteronormativity, a force to challenge the stability of identities and bodies in the aftermath of state, legal and other forms of violence. In *We Want it All: An Anthology of Radical Trans Poetics*, Andrea Abi-Karam and Kay Gabriel speak of these endeavours in capacious terms when they state:

> We're writing at a juncture of crisis – of longstanding roots and rapid progression, deeply embedded in economy and ecology and palpably felt at the level of everyday life. We're also writing in a moment of revivified theory and practice against capital and empire.

Echoing the work of poet and political activist Amiri Baraka, they go on to state: 'What we want is nothing other than a world in which everything belongs to everyone' (2020: 1). Visions of queer and trans cornucopias – the intersecting of profusion, analysis and critique – are tied to politics of futurity of social justice projects that insist that gender and sexual liberation are not endpoints but rather the very conditions for responses to queer and trans necropolitics (Haritaworn, Kuntsman and Posocco 2014), the traps of visibility (Gossett, Stanley and Burton 2017) and inclusion (Rao 2020). This volume sets out to unpack queer and trans anthropologies that produce forms of witnessing and ways of being with, looking to reimagine queer and trans life as produced within the conditions of a troubled present. While these anthropologies emerge as sites of hopeful worldmaking, they also often demand engagement as a visceral response, as a shift in representation that acknowledges 'the labor of discomfort, feeling, positioning, and repositioning' (Campt 2021: 15) premised in the process of learning to see. Through ethnographic analysis, authors in this volume shift queer anthropology towards a discussion of practices, poetics and abstractions that sustain queer and trans vitalities as they configure new modes of engagement with conditions, dynamics and genres.

Overflowing desire exists in the affirmative turn that seeks out queer relationalities and pleasures in the face of violence and loss as much as in the longing for a difference from and in the here and now. This does not imply, however, that temporality of crisis is, then, necessarily one of uncertainty. Elizabeth Freeman's search for temporal and sexual dissidence through alternative temporal formations, drawing on Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, notes how the grip of time on bodies sets out a new anatomo-chronological schema that is understood to bring out the body's 'arrangement, capacities and functions' (Freeman 2019: 3) in ways that frame bodies and subjectivities as temporalized interfaces, inventive and dissolutive, at once individualizing and collectivizing. We turn to the field of queer anthropology as a key site where these are produced in conversations with a wide range of interlocutors and disciplinary histories, and vantage points from which gender and sexuality become materialized in relations. In the grip of global economic and political crises, the temporality of queer relations shifts to speculative dimensions in which everyday experiences of care and endurance are entangled with geopolitical conflict, genocide, incarceration and deportation (Stanley 2021). The explicitly temporal aspects of these structures and relations frame a connection between crisis and the normalization of reactionary national and transnational gender and religious politics (Peumans 2018).

Queer and trans chronopolitics, then, insist that queerness is, as Muñoz (2009) argues, at once a horizon of possibility – the 'not yet here' – and a critical stance against the present; a persistent gesturing towards and a sensing of utopia as practice and method: cruising, longing, time-travelling, shimmering figures (Steinbock 2019) against teleologies and straight time (Aaberg 2024). This volume takes the multitemporal heterogeneity of the everyday (García Canclini 1997) as the basis of queer and trans anthropological analysis. Against a background marked by endless ordinary crises, widespread precarity and disrupting critical events, queer investments in futurity chart the challenges and pleasures in everyday experiences of gender and sexual dissidence and the labours of attentiveness and endurance that sustain socialities and coalitions, often against all odds.

Drawing on the rich and textured archive of queer anthropological research and theorizing, the chapters in the volume engage critically with practices of future-making in anthropology. They confront the normativities of straight, normatively gendered anthropological time-making and time-keeping apparent in the assumptions that govern framings of human and more-than-human lifecycles, by

recovering the multiple, off-beat and out of sync. They chart the contours of queer and trans worldmaking and redraw anthropologies of the future from the textured accounts of situated experiences, shifting temporalities and old and new crises. The ethnographically rich and conceptually innovative contributions collected in the volume address queer and trans life as it emerges and endures in response to economic shocks, relations between religious and queer lifeworlds, neoliberal development regimes, migration and asylum, HIV/AIDS chronicity, global pandemics, in queer and trans activism and communing, and creative experiments with emergent socio-technical systems such as AI. Queer and trans anthropological sensibilities are mobilized to chart multitemporal horizons of stasis and change, to refigure the social in the recomposition of sexuality and gender across collectives and experiments in radical coexistence and conjunction and openness – parataxis – as analytics, poetics and worlding.

Displaced Coordinates

This volume emerged out of conversations held over several years under the aegis of the European Network for Queer Anthropology (ENQA), a part of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA). As members of ENQA, we have worked collectively and collaboratively to advance research on sexual and gender diversity from an anthropological perspective, and queer anthropology more broadly. This work takes place against a backdrop marked by revanchist anti-gender politics tied to transnational and global networks (Alm and Engebretsen 2022; Bassi and LaFleur 2022; Butler 2024; Corrêa, Paternotte and Kuhar 2018), whose operations are deeply felt in and outside the academy (Pearce, Erikainen and Vincent 2020). The re-entrenchment of anti-gender campaigns in their local and transnational iterations are part of the horizon that inflects our conceptual work. To the extent that the contributions to this volume provide nuanced analyses of queer and trans crises, so too are these projects animated by the alternative futures that subtend terms animating life in and beyond the academy. A critical component that prompted conceptual and personal investment in this project is that many of the workshop contributors and those in the editorial collective now live and work in academic environments defined by anti-trans politics sweeping across Europe in all directions. At the core of anthropology and its particular theoretical preoccupations, debates about the universal status of sex as a global

category[1] and against the purchase of the concepts of gender and gender identity have threatened to turn key journals, conferences and meetings into exclusionary spaces. Our objections as practising anthropologists working in queer and trans perspectives and across a range of issues in and beyond gender, sexuality and queer studies were met with institutional silence or perfunctory inaction.[2] Furthermore, many of us have or currently conduct our research in institutional contexts that are aggressively rolling back gender equality policies, practices and funding priorities while redefining queer and trans theory as breaches of academic freedom. Shared disbelief and rage were further evinced by the precarity of queer and trans voices in academic institutions, under siege by an anti-gender ideology compelled to reverse rights, freedoms and protections won by LGBTQI and feminist movements. Experiences of precarity within academia were made visible in industrial actions in the UK that aimed to tackle gender, ethnic and disability pay gaps, casualization and precarity in employment and workloads and falling pay. In Germany, the online campaign that started with #IchbinHanna and, later, #IchbinReyhan triggered discussions about the type of futures that are attainable for academic researchers in a system that fails to generate positions and stability. As an editorial collective diversely positioned in academic institutions, we were confronted by the compounding effects of anti-gender and anti-trans ideology and academic precarity on queer and trans scholarship. Hence the question of what queer and trans anthropology has to say about the future also speaks to the experiences of queer and trans scholars and their futures.

The call for papers for our biennial workshop in 2021, from which the collection contained in this edited volume was largely drawn, was deliberately open-ended. Those we accepted at the workshop and those in this volume seek not to presume a constitutive whole against which the themes discussed could then be appropriately accounted for in a predetermined dialectic. The volume instead assembles work that challenges and expands, inter alia, one of the most difficult terms of this association, namely the 'E' for 'Europe'. A perpetual question raised in ENQA, indeed one of its animating conversations, is how queer anthropology can approach the term 'Europe' in a way that is productive and open-ended. If ENQA was founded, to some degree, to respond to the practical challenges around the lack of queer representation in anthropology departments across the continent, its thematic and conceptual approach to the other meanings of 'Europe' has proven in some senses to be more challenging to define than the perpetually difficult 'queer'. Defining 'Europe' also becomes a call

to expand the discipline's conceptual horizons by focusing on tensions that underpin senses of emplacement in the continuously displaced 'here and now' (Muñoz 2009). Anthropological methods and theories are deployed by activists resisting state-sanctioned violence against gender and sexual minorities in order not only to document governmental practices that contradict a liberal ethos of inclusivity, providing complex renderings of how activists come to understand themselves as both vulnerable to state violence and as actors with capacities to respond to homonationalism (Aaberg 2022). As austerity transforms everyday experience through rapid modernization and the fast-changing demands of technocapitalist formations, it brings forward a transnational crisis that variously encompasses global cultures of science, medicine and consumption, remaking bodies in fragmentation and dispersal (Seremetakis 2019). In other words, and as the chapters gathered in this collection demonstrate, 'Europe' is not strictly a descriptor, but rather here it aligns with what Arondekar and Patel have termed 'area impossible'– that is, a range of challenges 'to configure a queer form that attends to congealments, failures, and translations of knowledge through an understanding of area as both incommensurable and quotidian' (2016: 153).

In grappling simultaneously with 'Europe' as a geography of interest and provocation, the chapters in this volume collectively speak to how we might question facile appeals to politics of belonging – whether social, political, sexual – or boundary-setting practices that do not return us to a revelation that such experiences are always already exclusionary (Muñoz 1999). The contributions therefore turn to imagining alternative futures in which gender and sexual alterity is not made legible solely through grammars of crises, complicated by a political economy of NGOization and the near exclusive representational demand of queer 'vulnerability'. Instead, contributors seek to address what forms of queer and trans life are even possible within what is now called 'Europe' (Bacchetta, El-Tayeb and Haritaworn 2015). Contributors herein reflect on queer activism but also the everyday trials of finding lives worth living, considering lingering moments at turns painful, pleasurable, and unmistakably raucous from an era marked by civil unrest that together demands a reflection on the politics of civil society actors responding to the inequalities unavoidably present after the 'Euro-crisis' of 2008 and the ongoing fallout from the global Coronavirus pandemic. In this context, the volume engages with the centrality of borders and boundaries to queer and trans life (Shakhsari 2014). The emerging field of queer and trans migrations, which highlights the complexities

of queer border-crossings (Altay 2023) and their increasing criminalization (Luibhéid and Chávez 2020), notes how an increase in queer and trans movements across borders has also brought forward populist policies, hate campaigns and policing and containment strategies that routinely bring many to extreme vulnerability, but that 'crisis' is also deployed, conversely, to stage humanitarian panics that reflect the exclusion of queer and trans adults, and children, from rights and protection (Chávez and Masri 2020; Liinason 2023). Queer crisis, in this sense, demands thinking beyond liberal frames of compassion and tolerance as much as it demands the constant evaluation of how multiple coordinates conjure and stage the possibilities of the present. In this volume, Chalkidis examines how Greece, as a critical point of entry for LGBTQI asylum seekers, becomes tasked with implementing harsh regulatory practices in evaluating asylum cases. This is complicated by how 'Greece' is itself queered within the EU imaginary as a country lacking the strong systems of governance against which the wealthier countries of the Union's north define themselves. As Chalkidis suggests, the portrait of Greek state-sanctioned violence against LGBTQI asylum seekers, documented through invasive surveillance practices and ever more normative means of evaluating claims to LGBTQI identity, is complicated by the fact that the Greek state is itself queered as Europe's less-modern other as the origin of the 2008 financial crisis. Homonationalism takes on varied and complex meanings as it weaves its way through various channels of governance, from the operative centre of EU authority in Europe's north, through to the everyday practicalities of rule in asylum facilities in its south.

The question of liberal tolerance is not only complicated within and along borders but is considered within international fora. Laura Stark's work on the experiences and activism of those identified as *geis* in Tanzania similarly seeks to place the influence of global processes of economic extraction in context with material consequences through ethnography. For Stark, the experience of her informants, whose *gei* identity signals their feminine self-presentation and their desire for other men, is complicated by a neoliberal political economy that has sought to curtail foreign resources available to gender and sexual minorities. Tanzanian *geis* must learn to navigate the confines of a harsh governing regime unfriendly to foreign aid for gender and sexual minorities through the neoliberal channels of NGOs. Stark's interlocutors' lives are mired in economic precarity, compelling them to rely on an NGO claiming to support *geis* through empowerment programming that imparts recommendations

to beneficiaries to maintain gender normative comportment under the pretence of survival, which seemingly works to discredit the representative function of the NGO form. Yet against these conditions, they attempt to find meaningful and pleasurable lives. Rishav Thakur's contribution implicitly addresses the promises and failures of development through the role of queer and trans activism housed through globally-funded NGOs. The promise of representational inclusion circulated through funding channels connecting Europe and its former colonies prompts complex questions surrounding transnational economic regimes that call into question liberal framings of inclusion.

The chapters of this collection forge larger theoretical quandaries of the sheer possibility of emplacement. Questions over long-standing and transnational efforts at reforming the economies of the global South are contrasted against the experience of those whose lives mark the continual withdrawal of welfare provisions and the neoliberalization of social services more broadly. Living in 'dark' or 'end times' is marked by an expansive present of unending crises. Economic precarity reflects forms of socio-economic neglect, if not an intended queer necropolitics (Haritaworn, Kuntsman and Posocco 2014), in a return to collective economic practices that were once the constitutive outside of postwar modernity (Escobar 2008). Shared accommodation as one such example elaborated in this volume, once at most a transitory period of youth, has come to signify the economic exclusion from property ownership once central to understandings of (heteronormative) urban citizenship in a market economy. In this context, authors in this volume ask new questions about whether these once queer practices, which challenge heteronormativities of single-family property habitation and ownership, also challenge economic models and narratives. As Andreas Streinzer's contribution highlights, variously positioned interlocutors, including migrants who share flats out of economic necessity, can continue to be invested as sites of queer resistance even when their lives are ruled by economic precarity.

Crises demand new thinking through exclusion in our present 'dark times' (Ortner 2016) while also seeking to underscore moments of creative reimagining that animate the disparate efforts to combat precarity, vulnerability and necropolitics (see Wardlow 2019). If Stark underscores the complexities of *geis* finding lives worth living, Thakur's chapter illustrates how Assamese queer and trans activists are attempting to forge new theoretical frameworks that seek to query the Indian state's efforts at urban development. In turn, even

in the times of tremendous losses of life from HIV/AIDS, Lanza Zamanillo argues that the process of grieving can be reconsidered as a collective one, challenging the boundaries of individual and collective, which provides the theoretical means of moving beyond the isolation of such losses. Focusing on a community video archive project that seeks to document the life and times of long-term survivors of the AIDS pandemic in London, United Kingdom, Lanza Zamanillo grapples with the textured qualities of queer grief, threading together the video testimonies of the participants with meditations on illness, loss, sexual dissidence and queer longing in the work of filmmakers and artists – Derek Jarman, Tom Joslin, Peter Friedman and Jean Carlomusto, all accomplished documentarists and activists in the AIDS crisis. The testimonies of those who, by their very own definition, survived the crisis against all odds reverberate and extend into the experiences that emerge from these influential AIDS visual culture texts, to construct a form of memorialization that eschews grandiosity and monumentality. Queer grief turns instead to register the minutiae of the everyday, people's AIDS diaries – scrupulously detailed accounts of the experience of illness or caring for the sick, as well as loss and its aftermaths – and recollections as a process that conjures a collectivity now, as well as the possibility of a future relationality to emerge out of what seemed unfathomable in the 1980s and 1990s, AIDS' chronicity.

Queer anthropology's alertness to charting vulnerabilities and responses to major social, historical and political fallouts resonates in different ways throughout the volume. So too does anthropology's perpetual interest in relations and making kin central to these analyses, which is rendered explicit in Rebucini's contribution. The author centres kin relations – reframed in the political imaginary of 'queer commoning' – to provide a vivid first-person account of radical queer organizing in Paris following the 2008 financial crisis through to the more recent Yellow Vests protests. Charting the complexities of organizing, and the intimate questions of subjectivity and identity, Rebucini documents the rise and eventual fracturing of the French capital's queer political organization known as CLAQ (Comité de Libération et Autonomie Queer). Following economic crises, CLAQ sought to make a distinctly anti-corporate queer political agenda through protesting the incorporation of Paris's pride events. Although CLAQ was split on whether to support the Yellow Vests movement, documented with personal ethnographic detail, this suggests a profound interest in producing alternative futures in our midst. Rebucini asks what we can learn about queer futures even after

the dissolution of a radical queer political organization, complicating straight social movement narratives and expanding the political horizon and the conditions of possibility for a – queer and trans – 'permanent molecular politics'. Against what could be considered the 'durability' of the infrastructures of neoliberalism, surveillance and alterity (see Appel, Anand and Gupta 2018), the chapters ask us to consider how queer futures can be made legible beyond the representational and institutional confines – however politically expedient they may be. They ask, rather, how might we think of a queerness in the end times, or rather how we might reconceptualize enduring life around these conditions and infrastructures.

Counterfutures

Scholars in the field of queer and trans queer anthropology have embraced crises not only as decisive turning points but as an invitation to, once more, reinvent a discipline grappling with enduring crises. In the introduction to *Reinventing Anthropology* (first published in 1969), Dell Hymes already cautioned against the rebirth of anthropology moving from the study of 'man' to inhabiting shared terrains with other social sciences to survive the enduring crises that have shaped the discipline's theoretical and methodological development (Hymes 1969). Through ethnographic work, queer anthropologists are facing the new crises *in* the discipline through an emphasis on employing the conceptual tools of alterity, multiplicity and relationality to frame situated regimes of living (Murphy 2008), bridging anthropological analysis as a critical, conceptual, political intervention in the wake of the breakdown of classic anthropological practice and theory. For Hymes, in 1969, studying 'one's own kind' was seen as a narrow move borne out of the discomfort and dilemmas facing anthropologists in the field, but this move, while a reinvention, did not necessarily imply a clean rupture with the discipline's ethos; no one went far enough in challenging Eurocentric philosophical underpinnings of categories such as culture and human. The problem, for Hymes, was not simply about anthropology as a discipline, it was about the fundamentally moral dilemmas facing anthropologists as they conjured up alternative understandings to dominant narratives (for Hymes, an anthropology that was critical, political and personal was the only anthropology worth inventing, see Hymes 1969: 18 and following). Ethnographies of queer communities in the 1990s grappled with the complexities of doing anthropology about queer

kinship, community formations and relatedness (see Newton 2014, among others), and in so doing challenged traditional understandings of the object of anthropology, its modes of thought and its methods, from marginal positions within academic institutional settings (Boyce et al. 2018). While queer anthropological voices no doubt recognize similar experiences of epistemological silencing and being out of time in the context of a Europe in crisis and an anthropology always already in the process of continuous self-defence and reinvention, we propose to understand queer and trans anthropology as a way of inhabiting these crises beyond tropes of anachronicity (Rowlands 2022; Sarro 2022). Neither going forward nor backward, neither transforming nor reconciling visions of the world, queer anthropological analysis in Europe has long been in the process of connecting the conceptual apparatus of description, analysis and theorization to analogic capacities to produce research worlds beyond positivist holistic ethnographic convention (Boyce, Gonzalez-Polledo and Posocco 2019). Margins have become ever more salient as the futures of queer anthropology have been unravelling, and it is sobering to note that authors who pushed the field in the United States in the 1990s were able to do so from institutional settings, albeit not always from secure positions (Newton 2000) and have continued to be able to do so (Weiss 2024). Queer and trans anthropology in Europe has consistently emerged from predominantly marginal spaces precariously located inside and out of institutions.

Instead, context becomes productive of forms of coexistence, besideness and coalition, which unfold but not always at the same time and in the same place. For instance, Omar Kasmani reveals 'thin attachments' in Berlin's fractured affective geographies of queer and cross-cultural coexistence. Negotiating affects through habitual effects situates queer existence as a form of configuring, and being configured by, constellations of 'politically inconsistent, thinly configured, spatial attachments' that reimagine the temporal ordering of the city (Kasmani 2019). These 'postnational intimacies' expose queer as a fleeting object transformed in the affective traffic of crises. Rather than an 'outside-in' description of shared time, anthropology is understood as a relation set in motion by subjectivities and attachments always already produced by crisis, a commitment to context *and* universality, coexistence *and* the conditions of encompassing contemporaneity, speculation *and* semiotic inference. After all, as Kasmani notes, reflecting on Lee Edelman, 'thin is what survives in and of relating on a map without investing in the stability or coherence of objects that comprise those relations' (Kasmani 2019: 49).

Queer anthropology has long sought to examine critically and challenge dominant visions of the future that exclude or marginalize queer and trans perspectives and experiences (Saria 2021). Saria's detailed account of Hijra kinship in eastern India illustrates the constitutive role that this otherwise abject minority serves in maintaining heteronormative family structures as a means of both describing the centrality of trans lives to normative society as much as articulating an indictment on ethnographic practice that continues to sequester queer life as radically other or facing normative repression wholesale. But what makes 'the future' so undesirable in the field? The future as a singular concept is braided with neoliberal, imperial and colonial logics of power. These systems turn 'the future' into a normalizing machine in which the hierarchical formations of racial, sexual and gendered relations sustain heteronormativity and racialized systems of power, such as ethnonationalism and the caste system, as central and superior over non-normative expressions and identities. Berlin-based media studies scholars Eylul Iscen and Shintaro Miyazaki have noted the discursive and material praxis that shapes conceptions of the future as a political tool, a normative mechanism and a system of power that shapes collective ideas and aspirations that secure the survival of heteronormatively defined 'citizen-subjects' while relegating marginalized groups to a 'slow death'.[3]

Counterfuturing as a critical practice has been used to recentre marginalized and underrepresented positionalities and reclaim futures as a heterogenous and political entities. Queer and Trans Studies scholars have variously engaged counterfutures as transgressions of the 'spatial-temporal orders that determine and regulate the borders of knowledge, life/death, embodiment, movement, and social value' (Chen and cárdenas 2019: 472; Gonzalez-Polledo 2017), materializing knowledge and politics in a multiplicity of forms that implode categorical, experiential and representational boundaries. However, these counterfutures can also entail 'falling behind' and being exposed to violence, poverty, racialization or disability (Malatino 2019), and their existence is premised on radical forms of support and solidarity. As Engebretsen's chapter shows, coalition is a significant political form and strategy for collective future-crafting across differences. Addressing convergences in queer, climate justice and Indigenous Sámi environmental activism in Norway, Engebretsen charts the novel ways that have brought constituencies together in campaigns focused on challenging the environmental and social inequities that are the concrete results of Nordic settler colonialism. Situated coalitional protests reveal the inadequacies of Nordic social democracies'

consensus-based visions of social justice. Inclusion-as-domination has long been tied to colonial moral sensibilities and technologies of harm (Povinelli 2011). The alliances along queer, Indigenous and climate justice interfaces formed in response to local instantiations of the global climate crisis illustrate the making of climate justice counterfutures in the shadow of liberal tolerance, depoliticization and slow violence.

Early queer critiques of futurity revealed that procreation and family were seen as the dominant narratives of time. Lee Edelman, a queer theorist and literary scholar, described this phenomenon as *reproductive futurism*, a heteropatriarchal narrative of futurity that privileges the heterosexual family and the figure of the innocent child for the 'survival' of society (Edelman 2004). Edelman juxtaposed the social order grounded in reproductive futurism to queerness as an ethics and sociality grounded in the antisocial affective dynamics of AIDS stigma and abjection. Queerness in Edelman's work marked an antisocial politics of no future: a radical refusal of the heteronormative idea of a reproductive future. The last twenty years since Edelman's work have seen a reduction of HIV stigmatization and the introduction of equal rights, such as gender and marriage equality in some parts of Europe. These changes reinforced some forms of progressive futurity in which mottos like 'it gets better' acknowledged the not-so-good present in anticipation of an improved future. Yet, these developments brought about homonormativity, the expansion of normativity to include *some* form of LGBTQI expression, and homonationalism, the strategic use of LGBTQI rights agendas by some nation-states as a means of reinforcing nationalist agendas and justifying exclusionary policies. As scholars have shown, gay rights became a litmus test for progressive values, distinguishing the limits of modernity and the line between 'good nations' and 'bad nations' (Haritaworn 2015; El-Tayeb 2011; Puar 2007, 2013). When we look at the trajectory of gay rights movements in Europe, we understand that the sense of going beyond stigma and marginalization has contributed to the dominant narrative of a homophobic past and a progressive present. Counterfuturing challenges the teleological logics and moral positionalities of improvement to reframe 'Europe' as a fraught terrain where temporalities are continuously being undone in response to the challenges of a shared troubled present. The Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the rise of right-wing populism in Europe challenged the positivist views of a linear European progress. These events are often considered by some as a 'crisis' over what was once considered the 'normal'

progression of time. Queer people of colour and queer decolonial interventions have noted complicities between LGBTQI rights discourse and politics of othering, militarization, nationalism, war and anti-immigrant sentiments in Europe (see, for example, Haritaworn 2015). In this context, counterfutures emerge as critical approaches that question ideas of progress, continuity and normative expectations and develop conceptual analytics to grapple with time, possibility and existence. They challenge the hegemonic visions of the future that often reinforce existing power structures and inequalities and offer alternative perspectives that disrupt the future as conventionally understood, and particularly its implications for marginalized and excluded groups. Indeed, following Strathern (2013), counterfutures can be understood as ways of seeing that emerge through conceptuality, which determines the shape of the problems or concerns that anthropology can and must orient itself towards. Chanzà, in their chapter in this volume, visits the notion of crisis in Benaigua, a village in Spain, with an analysis of care as it emerges in two contexts: the growing population of elderly and the preservation of Catholic objects deemed as '*démodé*' in highly secularized Spain. In this unlikely crossing of religion and sexuality, the chapter situates camp as a queer aesthetic expression that doubles as a tool for survival, a way of coping in adversity both to bring back what is deemed irrelevant and a means of survival for religious groups who continue to care for the elderly. Chanzà's chapter highlights the role of LGBTQI advocates, public actors and bottom-up initiatives in creating and sustaining opportunities for queer and trans futures.

Visions of queer and trans life resist dominant narratives of the future to conceptualize life in the midst of atmospheres of violence (Stanley 2021). By centring fragility, ambiguity and vulnerability, our volume explores the emancipatory potentials of future anthropologies that are not limited to traditional approaches and perspectives but instead actively engage with diverse positionalities and voices. Covid-19 has enhanced the experiences of intersectional inequality all over the world, but experiences of the pandemic affected marginalized groups disproportionately, including sex workers and LGBTQI migrants, some of whom were excluded from rights and services they needed for survival. In the wake of the global outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the global rise of right-wing populism has aligned reactionary right-wing ideologies with anti-gender, anti-feminist and anti-LGBTQI attitudes and policies (Altman and Symons 2016; Weiss and Bosia 2013). Bayramoğlu and Varela's chapter presents a 'counterintuitive perspective' on the pandemic as a

state of emergency, viewing crises as opportunities to question norms and rethink simplistic notions of a good future and life. The chapter proposes a theory of fragility that aims not to avoid but rather develop strategies to coexist with a crisis. The chapter recovers queer scholarship and artistic practice that intertwines imaginings of future, politics and social cohesion with memories of loss, pain and resistance. In Thakur's contribution, similarly, forms of queer intimacy, longing and kinship are negotiated against and through the violence that subtends development and its promises of modernity. Through rich autoethnographic details, Thakur uses the practice of cruising to queer the boundaries of research. Thakur's desires for queer kinship while conducting research in his hometown foster unexpected intimacies with queer and trans grassroots activists. And yet, when these encounters develop into critical interpretations of the Indian state's efforts to develop Guwahati's urban space, making it 'smarter' and 'greener', they also destroy the various subterfuges in urban space these activists used for casual encounters. But rather than retreat into the seductive defeatism of queer nostalgia for a more sexually open past free of development governance, Thakur's research interlocutors gesture at how queer life becomes reimagined through unpredictable intimacies that emerge in public space.

In turn, as Cupitt's chapter shows, queer and trans anthropological sensibilities engage creative experimentation and agential complexity. Cupitt's piece performs authorial openness and relationality through an active engagement with AI technologies in the creation of a poetic work. The comingling of human and algorithmic agential potential conjures a range of 'ethnographic effects' (Strathern 1999), which include the blurring of conventional literary genres and creative forms as well as the emergence of queering conjunctions and 'becoming with'. For Cupitt, these are live forms of sympoietics, which, as Donna Haraway's work has shown, connect to novel ways of living in proximity and relational becoming. [Sym]poietics is therefore conceptual work as well as an act of experimentation in queer and trans poetics that connects anthropological sensibilities to ordinary acts of creation. They are transient marvels that propel the sensorium towards an opening and the possibility of sensing and being in parataxis, as temporal, scalar and boundary disjuncture (see also Giles 2021). [Sym]poeietics, alongside the other concept work in this collection, grapples with the relations of power that manifest through the delineation of the contours of areas and 'segregated field formations' (Arondekar and Patel 2016: 155), to show that borders and frontiers can be concrete manifestations of acts of disavowal

of the politics that subtend knowledge formation in and beyond anthropology (Posocco 2021).

Our iteration of a future anthropology aims to demystify and contest the material conditions of hegemonic forms and narratives of futurity. Taking issue with the future, whether it be countering the future or life within and beyond crisis, is an intellectual investment in the incompleteness of the present. In their 2017 edited volume, Peter Locke and João Biehl explore the plasticity and unfinishedness of human subjects and lifeworlds while questioning the totalizing analytical schemes of social sciences. Future anthropologies are tied to practices of coming to terms with uncertainty, a sense of movement and possibility that is part of life. The anthropology of becoming, according to Locke and Biehl, carries destructive and violent potentials while centring the human subject as ' … always under construction' (Locke and Biehl 2017: 4). A similar sense of unfinishedness can be found in the works of José Esteban Muñoz, where queerness is an ideality, '… a horizon imbued with potentiality' (Muñoz 2009: 1). In the context of an imperative need for improvement that permeates biopolitics, queer and trans counterfutures invoke a resistance to becoming complete through logics that connect production to the management of populations. In this context, queer and trans futures remain incomplete: partial, uncoordinated, sketchy and (self)sufficient (Harney et al. 2021: 48). This brings us to the way we could talk about hope and queer futurity as a force that sustains life despite nationalist, militarist, authoritarian forces (Bayramoğlu 2021), at once conceptualizing conditions of subjugation and marginalization and reimagining futurity as a condition of the present.

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Notes

1. See, for example, a recent statement by the American Anthropological Association and Canadian Anthropology Society boards regarding transphobic violence in anti-gender positions, https://americananthro.org/news/no-place-for-transphobia-in-anthropology-session-pulled-from-annual-meeting-program/, accessed September 2023.
2. It should be noted that when faced with similar concerns within the American Anthropological Association, the scholarly society that some of us are also members of, we were able to lobby more effectively through the well-established structures that are the product of years of organizing (see Lewin and Leap 2002; Weiss 2024).
3. Iscen and Miyazaki organized a one-day symposium, 'Counter-Futuring', in September 2022 at the Institute for Cultural Inquiry (ICI).

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