

Queer/migration: An unruly body of scholarship.

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## **Queer/Migration: An Unruly Body of Scholarship**

Eithne Luibhéid

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**In lieu of** an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

### **Queer/Migration** **An Unruly Body of Scholarship**

*Eithne Luibhéid (bio)*

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Most scholarship, policymaking, service provision, activism, and cultural work remain organized around the premise that migrants are

heterosexuals (or on their way to becoming so) and queers are citizens (even though second-class ones). Where do queer migrants figure in these frameworks and activities? How do we conceptualize queer migration—which is at once a set of grounded processes involving heterogeneous social groups and a series of theoretical and social justice questions that implicate but extend beyond migration and sexuality strictly defined, and that refuse to attach to bodies in any strictly identitarian manner—in order to challenge and reconfigure the dominant frameworks? Queer migration scholarship, which has flourished since the 1990s, takes on these and other ambitious questions.<sup>1</sup>

An unruly body of inquiry that is potentially vast in scope, queer migration scholarship participates in and contributes to wide-ranging debates that traverse multiple fields and disciplines. It has been fueled by the fact that international migration and related transnationalizing processes have transformed every facet of our social, cultural, economic, and political lives in recent decades. Sexuality scholarship has started to explore how "the age of migration" is centrally implicated in the construction, regulation, and reworking of sexual identities, communities, politics, and cultures.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, migration scholarship, which addresses immigration, emigration, transnationalism, diaspora, refugees, and asylum seekers, has begun to theorize how sexuality constitutes a "dense transfer point for relations of power" that structure all aspects of international migration.<sup>3</sup> Queer migration scholarship, which explores the multiple conjunctions between sexuality and migration, has drawn from and enriched these bodies of research—as well as feminist, racial, ethnic, postcolonial, public health, and globalization studies, among other fields. **[End Page 169]**

This special issue not only extends queer migration scholarship by reworking critical areas of research but also establishes directions for future research. One group of essays explores how insights gained from trans studies demand a rethinking of queer migration histories, theories, and methodologies. A second group argues for the importance of reconfiguring the temporalities and geographies within which queer

migration is usually explored, by examining how five centuries of slavery, imperialism, forced transportation of prisoners, and exile leave legacies that shape present-day queer migration. A third group reroutes debates about queer complicities with neoliberalism into a careful consideration of the struggles that result for queer migrants.

## Power, Knowledge, Identities, and Trans Scholarship

Queer migration scholarship has consistently explored how overlapping regimes of power and knowledge generate and transform identity categories. Several fundamental insights have guided the research. First, queer migration scholarship has been greatly enabled by understanding sexuality as constructed within multiple, intersecting relations of power, including race, ethnicity, gender, class, citizenship status, and geopolitical location. Second, rather than inscribe migrants from extraordinarily diverse backgrounds within a developmental narrative of LGBTQ identities, many scholars instead deploy the term *queer* to acknowledge that all identity categories are burdened by legacies that must be interrogated, do not map neatly across time and space, and become transformed through circulation within specific, unequally situated local, regional, national, and transnational circuits. Moreover, these transformations cannot be understood within progressive, unilinear, and Eurocentric models. Illustrating these insights, Martin Manalansan shows that queer migrants frequently arrive in nation-states not to begin "assimilation" but to experience continued though transformed engagement with nation-states and regimes of power that have already profoundly shaped their lives.<sup>4</sup> Manalansan thus challenges the dominant, ethnocentric model that views queer migration as a movement from "repression" to "liberation," instead highlighting the fact that migrants experience "restructured" inequalities and opportunities through migration. Moreover, as Bobby Benedicto argues in this volume, these transformations affect those who stay "at home," not just those who migrate, and, in many instances, help to form transnational social fields, cultures, and politics.<sup>5</sup>

The concept of heteronormativity has proven particularly useful in untangling connections among power, knowledge, and queer migrant identities. Refusing a homo-hetero binary logic, this concept is valuable for its ability to articulate **[End Page 170]** how normalizing regimes produce heterogeneous, marginalized subjects and positionalities in relation to a valorized standard of reproductive sexuality between biologically born male-female couples who...

# QUEER/MIGRATION

## An Unruly Body of Scholarship

Eithne Luibhéid

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Body/politics: Women and the Discourses of Science, the liberal theory, in accordance with the modified Euler equation, raises the gas-like storm controversially.

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