

Heterobinary-Panopticism: How Queerness Reveals the Disciplining of Identity

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Preliminary Productions

What can queerness teach someone about themselves? How can it reveal ways religion, specifically Christianity, becomes complicit in oppressive constructions of identity? This paper is chiefly concerned with religion's role in the social regulation and construction of identity within the United States and the impact that has on the individually authentic self-actualization of queer people, particularly those who do not fit into the gender, romantic, and sexual binaries imposed upon us usually by cisgender heterosexuals. Queer identity has come to encompass far more than just those people who are "not straight" and can conceivably be better understood as any person who does not fully align with the dominant social constructions of gender, romance, and sexual identity. As such, this paper explores ways queer materiality is regulated by the colonial gaze—both within and without the LGBTQ+ Community—as an exercise of disciplinary power, all in ways which reinforce those dominant ideologies of identity and subsequently perpetuate a specific social ordering that favors Christianity and capitalism.

I use the term "heterobinary-panopticism" to explain these intersections. "Hetero" is not only for heterosexual as the constructed normative sexuality, but also for the socially, legally, and medically imposed and produced heteronomous categorizations of identity which conflict with autonomous queer identity. Then "binary" is in reference to Michel Foucault's binary

operations and brandings such as permitted/forbidden, mad/sane, dangerous/harmless, and normal/abnormal, which are exercised over individuals through disciplinary power and surveillance.¹ Binary also accounts for other forms of branding and false dichotomies within gender, romance, sexuality, and religion, such as man/woman, male/female, gay/straight, in-love/out-of-love, married/unmarried, theist/atheist, and Christian/non-Christian. Lastly, “panopticon” refers to Foucault’s description of the automated surveillance and dis-individualization of power in such a way that each person no longer needs to be physically or forcefully made to obey, serve, conform, or even know who is actually in power because they have internalized their own subjection and become, in a way, their own self-observer who disciplines themselves.²

Post-Coloniality and the Panopticon

Many contemporary social values and beliefs within the US are still intimately steeped in colonial narratives and power regardless of whether they are about gender, race and ethnicity, marriage, sexuality, private property, or so on.³ This means that what is generally socially regulated and individually internalized through the disciplinary functions of the panopticon is coloniality (even amongst the colonizers themselves), contributing to the preservation of colonial ideologies throughout society even if very few people consciously realize that many of their beliefs and practices are still tied to colonialism. This panoptical scrutinization of identities and

¹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 183, 199.

² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 202.

³ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 4-5, 15-17.

behaviors through a colonial lens can be understood as the colonial gaze.⁴ For queer identities, the colonial gaze, especially with its correlation to Christianity, contributes to the vilification, fearmongering about, and stereotyping of queerness.⁵ Through legal and social value systems the colonial gaze also contributes to the overall commodification and domestication of queerness by “allowing” or “tolerating” certain queer identities inasmuch as those specific expressions of queerness do not threaten dominant principles like patriarchal and capitalistic gender roles, “family values,” or what is deemed “natural.”⁶ These are all ideologies which can be traced back to 19th century colonial and Christian constructions of the family and other domesticated identities,⁷ as will be briefly displayed in the following genealogy of their roles in constructing normative binaries and expectations.

An example of this colonial gaze occurring is when rainbow capitalism, also called “pinkwashing” or “rainbow washing,” supposedly tolerates and celebrates the LGBTQ+ Community every June but largely stays silent the other eleven months, while commodifying LGBTQ+ Pride and not working towards any meaningful improvement for queer people within corporate structures or society as a whole.⁸ Unfortunately, such real change and queer inclusivity are unproductive within a capitalist worldview due to being antithetical to profit motivations. The colonial gaze can also be seen in how same-sex marriage rhetoric has been assumed into US politics and foreign policy as this simultaneously strengthens domestic nationalism and US

⁴ “Colonial gaze” is contemporary terminology in postcolonial/decolonial studies, originating with Franz Fanon and Edward Said.

⁵ Espinoza, “Transing Religion,” 89-90.

⁶ Nicholas, *Queer Post-Gender Ethics*, 174.

⁷ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 44-45.

⁸ Zheng, “Your Rainbow Logo Doesn’t Make You an Ally.”

global power by supposedly caring about “the gays,”⁹ but lawmakers have generally ignored the rise of domestic anti-trans laws due to transgender and other gender nonconforming individuals undermining the culturally imbedded narratives around the body, gender roles, and family.

Moreover, despite US Protestants’ growing acceptance of same-sex marriage, at nearly 57% in 2012¹⁰ to nearly 70% in 2015,¹¹ and conceivably more since, these same churches seem to largely hold no acceptance for polyamory or open marriages/relationships,¹² even though 33% of Americans, and 51% of young adults aged 18-29, view them as acceptable.¹³ Protestants, while largely being affirming of same-sex marriage, also do not seem to understand, or they forget to include, transgender and nonbinary identities. For reference, a search through different Protestant denominations’ official doctrines/websites revealed that no Baptist denominations made affirmative mentions of nonbinary/transgender identities or polyamory/open marriages; no affirmations from Methodist or Presbyterian denominations with the slight exception of the United Methodist Church and Presbyterian Church U.S.A., which have both started including “nonbinary” as a valid gender on church membership forms in the US;¹⁴ none from Pentecostal denominations; and none from the Church of Christ or the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. However, three specific Protestant denominations did explicitly affirm nonbinary/transgender identities, those being the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,¹⁵ United Church of Christ,¹⁶

⁹ Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 9-10; Rainer, *From Pariah to Priority*, 51-52.

¹⁰ Pew Research, “Views About Same-Sex Marriage Among Mainline Protestants.”

¹¹ Jones, “Attitudes on Same-Sex Marriage by Religious Affiliation.”

¹² Reese, “Polyamory and Christianity,” 151-53.

¹³ Parker, “View of Divorce and Open Marriages.”

¹⁴ Hahn, “Church to Start Counting Non-binary Members;” Jones, “Changes Coming to Church.”

¹⁵ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, “Social Statement on Human Sexuality.”

¹⁶ United Church of Christ, “Transgender-Nonbinary.”

and the Episcopal Church of America.¹⁷ No official affirmations of polyamory or open marriages were found in any Protestant denomination. This data shows how the colonial gaze functions within Christianity to view gay, lesbian, cisgender, and/or monogamous identities as acceptable alongside straightness when other queer identities or relationships are not.

Domestication always places the domesticated groups into a hierarchical relation to white cisgender men whereby a semblance of “privilege” is allowed, though only in a subordinating way.¹⁸ Thus, when incorporating the colonial gaze with understandings of domesticity, it is no surprise then that current anti-queer rhetoric has relied so heavily on queer identities being a threat to “family” and “nature,” which, as stated, both have histories tied into Christianity. First, it was the unnatural prospect of two men or two women ever being sexual, as such an act was a clear affront to nature and God. Second, it was HIV/AIDS and how it was the natural consequence of divine punishment for unnatural sexuality or going against the divine ordering of sexuality. Then it became the period of “don’t ask, don’t tell” because homosexuality was not necessarily unnatural anymore, but it had become an uncomfortable political topic especially for Christians who would proclaim, “love the sinner, hate the sin.” More recently, same-sex marriage was opposed on familial grounds in that ‘real’ marriage was heterosexual and should produce children—a stance still officially taken by the Catholic Church.¹⁹

Now, anti-queer rhetoric is a comorbidity of trans-panic, a refusal to acknowledge “they/them” or neopronouns, and pedophile-panic. The former two panics encompass a fear of “unnatural” transgender/nonbinary identities and claims that children are living with “unsafe

¹⁷ Resolution EC18to22MW 040, “Renewed Commitment to LGBTQ+ Equality.”

¹⁸ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 35-36.

¹⁹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, “Article 7: The Sacrament of Matrimony.”

families” when parents allow their kids to receive gender affirming medical care or let them attend schools which are “forcing” transitions on children by using gender-affirming language. Such unfounded statements and fears are frequently pushed by conservative organizations like Turning Point USA through their speakers, School Board Watchlist,²⁰ and Professor Watchlist,²¹ or spread by right-wing news sites and by individuals on social media. The latter panic is a reinvigoration of pedophilia rhetoric around queerness, using new buzzwords like “groomer” or unfounded claims that pedophiles are now included in the LGBTQ+ Community.²²

My analyses here are certainly an overgeneralization, but they reveal a broader change in the way queerness has been treated and disciplined within the heterobinary-panopticon. This change has shifted queerness from being wholly unnatural and unmanageable starting under overt colonialism, to only partially unnatural but much more manageable by being subordinated to a progressive Christianity and state which can now control cisgender lesbians and gays by giving them some heteronormative “privileges” like monogamous marriage, ordination, employment, and performative DEI (Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity) efforts, all without needing to substantially rearrange their own configurations of power and normativity. Even the existence of queer and trans Christian theologies/ethics does not fully undo this power because these are often another inconsequential “privilege” that just reproduces colonial norms to make cisgender lesbians and gays fit into the faith, and are not generally viewed as perspectives for mainstream, white, cisgender and heteronormative churches.²³ Similarly, Foucault’s scholarship

²⁰ LGBTQ+ School Board Watchlist, Turning Point USA.

²¹ LGBTQ+ Professor Watchlist, Turning Point USA.

²² Lavietes, “Old Tropes Find New Life in Anti-LGBTQ Movement.”

²³ Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 21-22.

denoted how the gaze has historically moved from public spectacle, to trained classification, and then to professional penetration.²⁴

Queer identity in the West, then, has possibly undergone a related series of domesticating movements ending up in a place where the heterobinary-panopticon has reimagined and reconstructed aspects of queer identity in a nonthreatening way for power.²⁵ Rainbow capitalism and even rainbow Christianity are principal examples of this as these are the inclusion, appropriation, commodification, and universalization of “queerness” that is most often the queerness of white cisgender lesbians and gays. This allows corporations and churches to use a carefully curated “queerness” to sell products, be that pride merch or progressive religion, to people who are predominately not queer themselves.²⁶ This simultaneously allows corporations and churches to masquerade as “inclusive” or “affirming” of the LGBTQ+ Community despite lacking actual inclusive or affirming policies, doctrines, lobbying efforts, or material assistance. What we see here are the ongoing changes related to the disciplining of queer identities and is reflective of the broader, “indefinitely generalizable mechanism of ‘panopticism,’” which links all things back to power;²⁷ specifically the power of the state, capitalism, and Christianity.

The distributed effects of power are also present within the LGBTQ+ Community where, legally and socially speaking, white cisgender lesbians and gays have become far more accepted, included, and represented than other queer identities, possibly related to their efforts in mimicking heterosexual marriage and familial constructs in an expression of a kind of desire for

²⁴ Galston, *Archives*, 61-62.

²⁵ Espinoza, “Difference, Becoming, Interrelatedness,” 281.

²⁶ Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark*, 57-59.

²⁷ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 215-16.

the statuses of their oppressors.²⁸ But queerness is far greater than just the lived experiences or representations of white cisgender lesbians and gays. Yet it is in these intersecting and nuanced experiences of queerness where, tragically, the more privileged members of the LGBTQ+ Community (though not necessarily exclusive to them) can unknowingly become operators of the heterobinary-panopticon through their unintended reproduction of restrictive, dichotomous, and colonial conceptions of heteronormative, and even homonormative,²⁹ identities.³⁰

Several personal examples of this operation can be seen in how queer “safe spaces” are often devoid of any people of color due to many overarching and often purposefully unaddressed issues of racism within the LGBTQ+ Community witnessed in the historical erasure of queer people of color’s contributions to LGBTQ+ liberation.³¹ In contrast, specifically dedicated QPOC (queer people of color) groups have started, often on college campuses, where members can actually experience safety and acceptance. Anecdotally and online on social media sites, it is not uncommon to see lesbians and gays express disdain for expressions of queerness different from their own with observed statements like, “Trans women can’t be lesbians,” or “I don’t care what you call yourself, if you have a dick then you’re man enough for me.” These are perhaps tied into ways dominant narratives and representations of queerness in popular media tend to show it through a white cisgender and heteronormative perspective.³² These views not only ignore race, but the experiences of many transgender, intersex, and nonbinary people which

²⁸ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 73-75.

²⁹ ‘Homonormative,’ a term originating with Lisa Duggan, here refers to the homosexuality of typically white cisgender lesbians and gays as the normative experiences and expectations for all queerness.

³⁰ Vinthagen and Johansson, *Conceptualizing Resistance*, 103-04.

³¹ Downs, “Writing Gay History.”

³² Pullen, *Straight Girls, Queer Guys*, 82-83; Keller, “Straight Guys and the Queer Eye,” 51-52.

disqualify them from ever being or ever desiring to be “straight-passing” or “gender-passing,” such as the inability to afford gender affirming care/surgeries or the lack of support from families.

All of these previous examples represent Foucault’s infinitesimal distribution of disciplinary power over bodies because they fundamentally produce a heterosexual normativity from a place of queerness by expecting everyone in the LGBTQ+ Community to align with dominant, dichotomously gendered and sexed standards for the body that all find their origins in Christianity.³³ This universalization has attempted to reconstruct and domesticate queerness so it aligns more closely with the dominant social ordering but these are just clever tricks of the heterobinary-panopticon because neither including white cisgender lesbians and gays, affirming monogamous same-sex marriages in Christianity, nor the merchandising and marketing of Pride Month substantially change or threaten any underlying constructions of identity, capitalism, religion, or nationalism.³⁴ The queerness which is not so easily curated for purposes of power is swiftly met with, “a calculated economy of punishments,”³⁵ be it nonconsensual surgeries on intersex infants, trans-panic, “groomer” rhetoric, inescapable reinforcement of binary gender and sex, or even comments from more privileged LGBTQ+ people. Such intersections between identity, capitalism, religion, and nationalism complicate the ability to critique and change the LGBTQ+ Community, religion, or social conditions in meaningfully liberative ways because, as described, attempts to do so will just reproduce underlying normative constructions as self-

³³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 135-36.

³⁴ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 82-83.

³⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 103.

disciplining and make it difficult to imagine futures beyond these due to the internalization of this power.³⁶

On this connection between the technologies of panopticism and both rainbow capitalism and surveillance capitalism, Foucault states, “[t]he growth of a capitalist economy gave rise to the specific modality of disciplinary power, whose general formulas, techniques of submitting forces and bodies, in short, 'political anatomy', could be operated in the most diverse political regimes, apparatuses or institutions.”³⁷ Ultimately the heterobinary-panopticon must exist for capitalism to exist; the two are inexorably connected and directly opposed to the kind of queerness which promotes authentic self-actualization and community-actualization and does not hierarchize or place material resources behind certain expectations for gender, romance, or sexuality.³⁸ We must unchain identity from meanings that can no longer contain it by moving beyond externalized forms of social identity and location that only create safe expressions of queerness for power.³⁹ To begin achieving this, critical analysis of these technologies can reveal processes by which queerness can be used to subvert normative power relations while also addressing some immediate moral and material needs for the individual self-actualization of those who do not fit into any traditional norms or binaries. Queerness has, after all, usually been a grassroots process of community organizing and discourse which has not substantially involved normative constructions or spaces.

³⁶ De La Torre, *Resisting Apartheid America*, 103-104.

³⁷ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 221.

³⁸ Nicholas, “Remembering Simone,” 237-38.

³⁹ Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark*, 73.

Panoptical Gaze and Produced Gays

In many ways the effects of the heterobinary-panopticon and the role religion plays in it are best seen in the lived experiences of queer people who are explicitly and implicitly othered by these systems for having identities which do not adhere to easily classifiable binaries, or in other words, how queer people might be produced by the heterobinary-panopticon into Foucault's "delinquent."⁴⁰ Language, gendering, relationality, and medicalization will all be briefly analyzed to reveal queer resistances and subversions to these effects of power which are applicable to more people than just those in the LGBTQ+ Community.

"Language has by far been used to colonize bodies. In fact, the coloniality of language is one such strategy in controlling bodies."⁴¹ It is nothing new to note how gendered ways of describing people tend to carry masculine connotations because masculinity is seen as default or standard whereas femininity is not. But when accounting for nonbinary people, even "gender-neutral" language asserts the dominance of binary gender and cisgenderism. Generalized compliments like handsome (masculine)/pretty (feminine), assertive (masculine)/sassy (feminine), smart (masculine)/clever (feminine) all contain certain gendered components. Moreover, "gender-neutral" job titles such as firefighter or police officer (masculine)/dispatcher (feminine), professor (masculine)/teacher (feminine), and administrator or executive (masculine)/secretary (feminine) may be different jobs related to each other, yet they imply different gender roles and hierarchizing. All these examples reinforce certain rhetoric around

⁴⁰ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 251-53; Galston, *Archives*, 78-79.

⁴¹ Espinoza, "Difference, Becoming, Interrelatedness," 281.

identity which is not only patriarchal but render those outside of binary classifications linguistically and socially “unintelligible” despite professional attempts to be inclusive.⁴²

For example, asking someone’s pronouns is perceived as respectful, but outside of certain settings where pronouns are requested for the whole group, like some university classrooms or professional meetings, your pronouns are only being asked if you are clocked as “other” than man/woman; alternatively, if your gender expression causes you to pass as a man or woman then no one asks for pronouns even if your gender identity is nonbinary. The unintentional negativity caused from having enough privilege to misuse gender and sex interchangeably, misunderstand gender identity/expression/performance, and to be well-intentioned when asking or not asking someone for pronouns, can all impose binary hierarchies (not just for gender) and the normativity of cisgenderism onto the body.⁴³ Binary hierarchies may also force people who are men or women to restrict their own gender to what they have been socially conditioned to do, like perpetuating toxic masculinity to be perceived as “manly enough” or believing in a familial arrangement that subordinates wives to husbands to be considered “good Christians,” as such categories have historically been defined by notions of Protestant respectability to “protect” the state, society, and religion from outside threats who do not or cannot conform.⁴⁴

Such uses of language harken back to the panoptic mechanisms of internalizing dominant power, as the very language traditionally used for talking about identities is one which reproduces Christian expectations for personhood.⁴⁵ As an act of subversion to this control, younger generations of queer people are increasingly identifying in official documents (when

⁴² Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xxiv-xxv.

⁴³ Nicholas, *Queer Post-Gender Ethics*, 173-74.

⁴⁴ Lapidus, “Bottoming for the Queen,” 148-49.

⁴⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 202-03.

able) not as male/female and instead using labels like “other gender,” “X,” or “nonbinary”⁴⁶ while simply using they/them pronouns or someone’s name until otherwise informed, indicating a grassroots-level seizure of language and categorization away from colonialism.⁴⁷

Since language is used to define the body, it is feasible that language also influences how physical items and spaces are used and how they define gendered categories. “While unaware, at birth we are all exposed to a genderless/sexless existence. This is denoted by the use of the word ‘it’ in the question: ‘Is it a boy or a girl?’ We occupy a literal ‘no-man’s land’ until the literal and discursive gaze of the medical profession diagnoses us ‘male’ or ‘female.’”⁴⁸ From this moment of birth onwards, children are raised to navigate a world where nearly everything around them is ideologically gendered. Sectioning boys and girls in classrooms, during gym, and for competitions like sports, even including ones where “biology” has no influence like chess;⁴⁹ binary gender markers on concert tickets, medical documents, government paperwork, job applications, and school IDs; toy stores and aisles segregating toys and clothes for “boys” from “girls;” children’s digital media being clearly demarcated by gender based on the identities of the protagonists. Each of these areas are their own panopticons worthy of investigation, but the overall heterobinary-panoptical normalizing and gendering of life, items, and spaces is an attempt at producing a certain kind of “natural” gendered subjecthood and embodiment thusly reproducing the state and religious power which originally constructed it.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ James et. al., *2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*, 44-46; Nicholas, *Queer Post-Gender Ethics*, 171.

⁴⁷ Espinoza, “Transing Religion,” 88-89.

⁴⁸ Kerry, “Hypospadias,” 216.

⁴⁹ Phillips, “A Gender Divide in the Ultimate Sport of the Mind;” Gordon, “Gender and Chess.”

⁵⁰ Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 40-41.

Nevertheless, this relation to power can be undermined. “Whether one refers to ‘gender trouble’ or ‘gender blending,’ ‘transgender’ or ‘cross-gender,’ one is already suggesting that gender has a way of moving beyond that naturalized binary.”⁵¹ Maintaining a gendered society is necessary for the general disciplining and hierarchizing of said society because openly allowing people to self-actualize irrespective of any categorizations means they may become too oppositional to the established capitalist ordering, now wanting more political representation or unions. Thereby a community process of de-gendering lives, items, and spaces may be able to help reduce the hold colonialism has on bodies at an individual level while also addressing the immediate material needs of queer people by providing safer spaces and social interactions.⁵²

Relationality is an important component to social interactions, but there are often underlying stereotypes which reproduce Christian morals like those that forbid sex outside of marriage, sex in public spaces, or living with people of opposite genders, despite the history of LGBTQ+ criminalization showing how such nonnormative interactions were necessary. Another example is romanticism which is usually understood as the attraction one person feels towards another, but this is a stereotype as it pushes alloromantic⁵³ and monogamous conceptions onto relationality without any regard for the asexual, aromantic, or non-monogamous people who do not feel these ways. All these people still desire relationality, be it sexless, queer platonic,⁵⁴ polyamory, or so on, but what has changed for most forms of queer relationality is the ontology of that relationality to one which falls outside of Christian expectations for “biblical”

⁵¹ Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 42-43.

⁵² Nicholas, *Queer Post-Gender Ethics*, 19-20, 148-49, 197-98.

⁵³ ‘Alloromantic’ is the antonym of ‘aromantic’ and denotes the ability to feel romance, have crushes, etc.

⁵⁴ Sexless relationships are common for asexual people; queer platonic relationships generally reference aromantic people dating but do not always refer to dating as it can just indicate a deeper connection than heterosexual friendships often with non-sexual physical components like cuddling and sleeping together.

relationships and interactions or the moral interpretations of those. Specifically, in the case of marriage what we see is a state-sanctioning and universalizing of the stereotypes of alloromanticism and monogamy as viewed through Christian morals, without any provisions, whether legal, social, or religious, for other forms of relationality.⁵⁵

These contemporary stereotypes around “normal” kinds of relationships and identities relate to the ways colonialism pushed for economically and socially “productive” members through sexual purity, childbearing, and domestic discipline by harboring disdain for sex-workers, “homosexuals,” the unemployed, and those in ambiguous domestic relations who all fell outside of a naturalized national family structure.⁵⁶ Queer relationships, by principle of happening outside of these nationalistic and Christian expectations—that only sanction relations which further the power of capitalism and Western imperialism—offer a more ethical reimagining of relationality that exists in the freedom between the hard binaries of being single/married, in-love/out-of-love, or friends/partners.⁵⁷

Lastly, medical documentation can create uncomfortable or dangerous situations for queer people and is reminiscent of how power has changed its approach to regulating queerness.⁵⁸ These forms do not usually list options for being nonbinary or transgender without also having to select your sex assigned at birth as male/female and, if they have a space to fill in your own gender, the usual options besides man/woman tend to only be “OTHER” or “Choose Not To Disclose.” Both of these create a self-disciplining dilemma whereby queer people have to

⁵⁵ Ellison, *Civil Marriage*, 250; Espinoza, “Difference, Becoming, Interrelatedness,” 281.

⁵⁶ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 47-48.

⁵⁷ Ellison, “Civil Marriage,” 250; Espinoza, “Transing Religion,” 90-91.

⁵⁸ Jordan, *Convulsing Bodies*, 107.

“other” themselves by either outing themselves or identifying with a body they are not in order to receive thoughtful medical care.⁵⁹ While there is some merit to knowing a person’s sex assigned at birth in certain medical situations, it generally completely ignores intersex people who may have specific medical needs⁶⁰ while universalizing maleness and femaleness and correlating those with white standards of medical care.⁶¹ Relatedly, Assigned Female At Birth (AFAB) people will always be asked about pregnancy during medical examinations given they are “female” but this causes queer AFAB people in relationships with other AFAB people who do not engage in sexual activity which can cause pregnancy to out themselves to medical professionals. In response to these disciplining interactions, anecdotally, many queer patients undertake the educational burden to teach their healthcare providers about LGBTQ+ needs, choose a different doctor when able, or simply do not receive medical treatment. None of these are ideal but they do represent a necessity for queer people to define themselves and make autonomous decisions despite the medical industry routinely imposing colonial bodily expectations. With the rise of queer- and trans-phobia in the US, it is incredibly important to ensure the medical industry no longer takes away the voice of queer, nonbinary, transgender, and intersex people to define their own needs and desires in medical settings. Such a patient-centered endeavor would undoubtedly better serve everyone receiving medical care, not just those in the LGBTQ+ Community.

Language, gendering, relationality, and medicalization adequately serve as explicit examples of how those who do not adhere to gender, romantic, or sexual binaries are “othered”

⁵⁹ Hrynyk, “Queer(Ing) Medical Spaces,” 956.

⁶⁰ Hrynyk, “Queer(Ing) Medical Spaces,” 955–56.

⁶¹ Feagin, “Systemic Racism and U.S. Health Care,” 10-11.

in their everyday lives through the technologies of heterobinary-panopticism and a multiplicity of surveillance techniques.⁶² Implicitly, each one provides a subtle classificatory system for identity that, as previously evaluated, still cites colonial and Christian doctrinal and theological constructions of the dichotomously sexed/gendered body who is destined for monogamy despite society supposedly moving away from those religious influences.⁶³ Together these four examples form a cohesive message upholding the domesticity of women as child-bearers subordinate to men and the delinquency of queer people to make us conform to normative expectations, all while masquerading as “progressive” or “inclusive” in peoples’ everyday lives considering such representations do not cause power to substantially reorganize itself.⁶⁴ However, in response to many of these regulations, queerness has still resisted total disciplining and often stood in opposition to normative identity constructions because, in spite of the personal and material struggles, queerness is not teleological and does not recognize bodies as categorically static. Even when aspects of queerness have failed at intersectionality, been appropriated by the state or universalized to produce homonormative binaries, nationalism, and whiteness, LGBTQ+ liberation has maintained an inherent fluidity which emergently critiques power and normativity.⁶⁵ Such an inherently fluid epistemology resists heteronomous classifications, whether from the state or religion, and will (hopefully) always remain just out of reach of wholly scientific understandings of identity, all of which inhibit authentic self-actualization.⁶⁶

⁶² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 173.

⁶³ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, xii.

⁶⁴ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 103; McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 167-68.

⁶⁵ Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 22-24.

⁶⁶ Espinoza, “Transing Religion,” 91.

Persistent Panopticism?

The moment that we saw the transition from historico-ritual mechanisms for the formation of individuality to the scientifico-disciplinary mechanisms, when the normal took over from the ancestral, and measurement from status, thus substituting for the individuality of the memorable man that of the calculable man, that moment when the sciences of man became possible is the moment when a new technology of power and a new political anatomy of the body were implemented.⁶⁷

It is in the context of these new technologies and new bodies that this paper has evaluated some of the different interactions between colonialism, capitalism, and Christianity in the lives of queer people. They come together to ultimately represent the paradoxical nature of queerness and heterobinary-panopticism: they each require the other to exist as their current incarnations. Certain expressions of queerness are allowed by power but only when they align with preexisting Western understandings of identity. Yet even legalized queerness is subjected to a hierarchical ordering where queerness is subordinate to straightness, and it will always be that way because the allowances for queerness have only existed to make queerness and queer people more manageable to the operations of power. In this way queerness provides an “other,” a “deviant,” or “delinquent,” through which hegemonic and heteronomous normativity can be constructed and enforced. If those in power actually cared about fully including queerness, then all the previously discussed disciplining techniques would not exist, but they do not care because, even though they need a kind of “queerness” to help legitimize themselves in the 21st century, authentic queer identity still undermines their power even while, in certain cases, reifying it. At the same time, authentic queerness cannot be understood without being defined in opposition to those Eurocentric constructions of normative identity.

⁶⁷ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 193.

But Foucault's panopticon is not the exclusive way to understand these phenomena, nor should it be seen as the pinnacle of normative constructions. Rather it serves as one component for understanding how elements of visibility, control, and identity function within contemporary arrangements of power to give us the social and ideological forces necessary to construct a present-historic experience.⁶⁸ Power is always producing "reality" and the panopticon is just one such production of power. Power has existed before the panopticon and power will continue existing even after the panopticon has exhausted its usefulness.⁶⁹ Power will invent and reinvent identity for purposes of control so, for queerness, the heterobinary-panopticon and its colonial gaze are just the most effective regulators right now.

In conclusion then, as much as queer identity is imprisoned in the heterobinary-panopticon, it also exists in defiance of it. As the social, the political, the moral, the religious, all change form, so will queerness, so will the use of specific labels, and so will the ways queer people live into and understand their identities. Queerness might remain a response to material conditions and normative constructions, or it might get entirely consumed by power, or it could become something yet unimagined. But what currently centers queerness as evidenced in the lives of those outside heteronomous binaries is individual authentic self-actualization and relational community-actualization that challenges and subverts the ways queerness is regulated by the colonial gaze and used to reinforce dominant ideologies of identity that perpetuate a specific Christian and capitalist social ordering. This ordering utilizes binary brandings within its own fundamentally Christian doctrinal and theological understandings as well as across all bodies—straight or not—to posit only dichotomously gendered and sexed identities as

⁶⁸ Galston, *Archives*, 66-67.

⁶⁹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 194.

appropriate while stereotyping and vilifying the queer expressions which are not easily managed by religion or the state. These reproduced Christian constructions that discipline people through monogamy, gender roles, domestication, language, the universalization of white cisgender lesbians and gays, and any other processes described or undescribed, ultimately creates a predetermined future and “queerness” which are nonthreatening to structures of power like nationalism, capitalism, religion, and their perpetual chronological reproductive visions.⁷⁰ Authentic queerness then is a present vision of an undetermined liberative future.

⁷⁰ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 98, 159.

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