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Introduction

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Introduction

In 2010, after successive suicides of male gay youths in the United States,¹ Dan Savage and Terry Miller created a YouTube channel entitled the “It Gets Better Project” (see YouTube 2011a; “It Gets Better Project” 2011), offering a public space for the support of troubled, and potentially suicidal, gay youth.² Many diverse people from all over the world submitted personal online videos in support of the project (see Figure I.1),³ generally advocating that “life gets better” after the potential turmoil of early gay identification – turmoil evident in problems from family, school and society at large. The most noteworthy contribution to the project may be considered that of President Barak Obama. Speaking in an official online video from the White House, he affirms:

There are people out there who care about you just the way you are. And so, if you ever feel like because of bullying, because of what peoples are saying that you are getting down on yourself, you got to make sure to reach out to people you trust. Whether it’s your parents, teachers, folks that you know care about you just the way you are, you’ve got to reach out to them; don’t feel like you are in this yourself.... As a nation we’re founded on the belief that all of us are equal and each of us deserves to... be true to ourselves. That’s the freedom that enriches all of us. That’s what America is all about. And every-day it gets better. (YouTube 2011b)

Also in supporting President Obama’s discourse, a diverse range of openly gay White House staff contributed to the “It Gets Better Project”, adding personal stories of coming out (see YouTube 2011c), affirming the citizenship
Figure I.1 A collage of images of some of contributors to the “It Gets Better Project”, created by David Sullivan (see note 3). At the time of writing, over 350,000 people have supported this project (see It Gets Better Project 2011). Barak Obama’s contribution to this (discussed in the Introduction to this book) may be considered as central; in advocating transnational citizenship ideals for gay youth (see Savage and Miller 2011). Image © David Sullivan. www.flickr.com/davidnewengland
potential offered. This included Jeffrey Crowley, director of National AIDS Policy at the White House (see Figure I.2), who discusses his childhood and the monitoring of his hand gestures and behaviour, stating that he was “afraid of who he was”, fearful of humiliation and punishment.

In January 2011, gay rights campaigner David Kato (1964–2011) was murdered in Uganda (see Figure I.3), following potentially impending legislation likely to be introduced which would punish homosexual activity in the country, and which included the death penalty under certain circumstances (see Chapter 1, Chapter 5; BBC 2011; Gay Rights Uganda 2011). Kato’s death was attributed by the Western press, as due not only to the deteriorating conditions afforded LGBTs (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) in Uganda, but also as specifically in response to the actions of the Ugandan newspaper Rolling Stone, which published front-page images of homosexuals (including Kato) as “known offenders”, accompanied with the headline “hang them” (see The Guardian 2011).

Barak Obama’s prophetic affirmation of LGBT rights (and the support of openly gay White House staff) in response to the suicide of gay youth in the United States, and the reporting of David Kato’s murder under oppressive circumstances in Uganda, offer contrapuntal visions of gay (and LGBT) identity in a transnational world. A complex vision is presented on which an African-American president addressing worldwide
online communities affirms the civil rights ideals of the United States, at the same time an African country is represented as primitive and punitive in response to gay rights. Race, identity, sexuality, community, social responsibility and the political world stage encompass the transactional possibilities of transnational communication. For Barak Obama, the White House staff and the “It Gets Better Project”, it is the civilizing process and the drive to the democratic ideal which frame the discourse of those responding to teen suicides, advocating a need to accept all “reasonable” diversity within the civil frame. For Uganda and David Kato, it is the postcolonial era which is made problematic. As the documentary Vanguard: Missionaries of Hate (Current TV 2010) reports, in Uganda it is the alleged intervention of American evangelist preachers (see Chapter 1) that has stimulated increased resistance to LGBT civil liberty there (see Huffington Post 2011). Hence the once-colonized is re-colonized by the West, reframing the civilizing mission of the historical colonizer. In this sense the “civilizing” mission – whether pro
gay rights and civic-facing (in Obama’s discourse), or anti gay rights and stimulated by “theology” (in Uganda’s case) – reframes the Western world. Within this dynamic, gay liberty is conversely – a central liberty of Western ideals within the United States, and, a central problem of Western ideals in Uganda.

Consequently, this book negotiates not only the problem of the Western frame, but also the vacillating location of LGBT identity, as between inside and outside. This also relates to the notion of transnational alliances and diverse struggles of identity politics in the exploration of such tensions. For example, Parvez Sharma’s landmark documentary, *Jihad for Love* (2007), exploring queer love and the Islamic faith (see Chapter 2; Pullen 2009), is not only an example of a worldwide cooperative project across many nations and identities, but also it directly foregrounds “imagined” contrapuntal alliances. Parvez Sharma employed Sandi Simcha Dubowski as producer on *Jihad for Love*. Dubowski’s documentary *Trembling Before G-D* (2002) explored Judaism in relation to LGBT lives (see Dubowski 2002; Pullen 2007, 2009) and *Jihad for Love* may be considered as an interconnected and discursive extension of *Trembling Before G-D*. Hence, Judaism and Islam work in harmony within a transnational political LGBT identity project. Therefore, this book not only considers oppositions and tensions between inside and outside, foregrounding notions of civil liberty and agencies of oppression, but it also considers creative alliances, and contextual collaborations previously unimagined.

However, before we explore this, it is necessary to consider the problem of a Western-oriented “universal” gay rights identity (discussed further below), in which dominant discourses of queer identity potentially disenfranchise the non-Western. Also, we should consider the constructive potential of the transnational. For LGBT identity this might involve capitalizing on the connective and proactive possibility of new connections (such as evident in Parvez’s and Dubowski’s alliance briefly discussed above), offering constant states of mobility, relating culture and media on a world stage.

**The transnational**

Ulrich Beck (2008) tells us:

[T]he foundations of the industries and cultures of the mass media have changed dramatically and concomitantly all kinds of transnational connections and confrontations have emerged. The result
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is that cultural ties, loyalties and identities have expanded beyond national borders and systems of control. Individuals and groups who surf transnational television channels and programmes simultaneously inhabit different worlds. (p. 7)

For LGBT identity, the advent of transnational media connections, across diverse nations, East and the West and the developed world and Third World, offers new scope for sexual identity, in ways previously unseen. As Steven Vertovec (2010) observes, “cheap telephone calls, faxes, email and frequent modes of travel have allowed for continuous and real time communication” (p. 15), foregrounding technology as the enabling force in new transnational connections and alliances. Marking a shift away from the historical “hold of the local,” to quote Anthony Giddens (1995), the “disembedding mechanism” of contemporary communication in the conditions of late modernity stimulates new connective pathways for sexual identity. We are living in a world where the discursive potential of an “imagined gay [or LGBT] community” (Pullen 2007), seems vividly real, enabling coalescence, interactivity and identity affirmation. LGBTs historically seen as “outside”, through transnational communication and correspondence, sometimes leading to migration and homecoming, are offered new identity potentials which bring different worlds together. This book considers the potential of LGBT transnational identity, exhibited through varying media forms, challenging the notion of a Western-centric LGBT identity.

As Robert Cohen (1996) explains:

[T]ransnational bonds no longer have to be cemented by migration or by exclusive territorial claims. In the age of cyberspace, a diaspora can to some degree, be held together or re-created through the mind, through cultural artefacts and through shared imagination. (p. 516)

Such recreation offers coalescence to disenfranchised LGBTs, offering a post-queer (Western) ethic wherein, following a Deleuzian potential (Deleuze 1984), there is a shift from “being” to “becoming” (see Chapter 1). In this sense a new shared imagination, enabled by transnational potential, challenges the notion of an exclusive “Western” queer subjectivity, and offers new scope for “reflexive modernity” in which social agents “acquire the ability to reflect on the social conditions of their existence and to change them in that way” (Beck 1994, p. 174), extending the potential of the postcolonial (see Ashcroft, Griffin and Tiffin 2010; McLeod 2010).
However, as William J. Spurlin (2001) acknowledges:

[Postcolonial inquiry has not sufficiently interrogated same-sex desire as a viable way of being positioned in the world [and that] homosexualities in non-Western societies are, at best imagined or invented through the imperialist gaze of Euroamerican queer identity politics, appropriated through the economies of the west, or at worst altogether ignored. (p. 185)

Consequently, LGBT transnational identity, is a theoretical idea, enabled no so much by a coming together and resolution of diverse histories of discount and disparity, but offers a multi faceted scope, which is as much about individuals and personal agency, as collective groups and sustained coalescent action.

The chapters of this book, offered by arrangement of diverse authors working in contrasting disciplines, similarly, offer different ways of looking, foregrounding a range of identity prospects, and theoretical stances. Organized under the themes of “Politics and Citizenship”, “Adaptation and Post Colonial Transitions” and “Performance and Subjectivity”, a focus is not placed upon the geographical or the cultural location, but upon theoretical and connective strands. In this sense the organization of this book does not rely on finding similarities or differences, nearness or distance, but reveals the processes and contemporary forms within media in exploring historical, political and cultural concerns.

LGBT Transnational Identity and the Media is less about defining the transnational prospect, and more about unpacking the transnational constituent. Hence, various methodological and theoretical approaches have been adopted within the book, which engenders the work as interdisciplinary, offering a showcase for diverse opinions and approaches.

Following earlier work on queer identity in relation to the diaspora and the postcolonial (see, for example: Hawley 2001; Patton and Beningo Sánchez-Eppler 2000), LGBT Transnational Identity and the Media foregrounds the intercultural and intertextual potential of contemporary media, which transcends the national. However, as Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden (2006) note, in considering transnational cinema “national identity has been jettisoned as a marker of cultural specificity [and] the performance of Americaness is increasingly becoming a ‘universal’ or ‘universalising’ characteristic in world cinema” (p. 2). Consequently, we should be aware of globalization which supports the dominant voice. I argue that LGBT transnational identity should not
be framed as Anglocentric, or Anglo-responsive, it should represent a coalescent flux of diverse, yet connected, voices.

**LGBT transnational emergence**

I argue that LGBT transnational identity is increasingly evident within many legislative, political, cultural and social forms. LGBT transnational citizens are involving themselves in “new storytelling” (Pullen 2009), crossing national borders, involving themselves in cultural and social exchange and offering new senses of hybridity (Bhabha 2004) through the opportunity of globalization and queer citizenship (Cruz-Malave and Manalanson 2002; Binnie 2004). However, this is not to say that LGBT transnational identity exists as a coherent and specific form of identity acting as a global context for sexual diversity, but that LGBT citizens, from varying locations responding to diverse situations worldwide, connect to the potential of transnational identity. In this sense there is not one specific form of LGBT transnational identity; instead LGBT citizens employ transitional identity potentials in service of improving life chances on a global stage.

Such multifarious transnational iconic potential may be evident in recent landmark legislative advances, such as the advent of same-sex marriage in South Africa (2006), Argentina (2010) and Mexico City (2009) (see Chapters 5 & 6). Also, it may be evident that many other countries are increasingly affording legislative respect for sexual diversity (see Equal Marriage 2010; IGLHRC 2010), stimulating popular cultural and social attention. At the same time, however, repression of LGBTs continues (and some cases increases) following historical traditions, such as proposed legislation in Uganda which could result in the death penalty being imposed there for homosexual acts (discussed above; see Chapter 1). Also, problematic relationships within some Islamic (see Whitaker 2006) and former colonial countries (such as Iran and Jamaica) where identities remain oppressed, increasingly are coming under scrutiny. Significantly, documentary texts such as *Dangerous Living; Coming out in the Developing World* (John Scagliotti 2003), *Jihad for Love* (Parvez Sharma 2007) and *Be like Others* (Tanaz Eshaghian 2008) (see Chapter 2), have received high-profile attention while reporting on some of these complex issues. At the same time adaptations of non-Western texts, such as the *Yacoubian Building* (see Chapter 8) and televisual media events, such as the fictional representation of a gay Islamic male coming to terms with his homosexuality within the primetime BBC television soap opera (in 2010) *EastEnders* (see Chapter 10), reveal
notions of “othering” and stereotyping, yet at the same time foregrounds increasing suitability for mainstream discourse.

Additionally, the increasing significance of the World Wide Web, offering opportunities for social networking and education, evident in video forms such as YouTube (discussed above), display new “documentary” scope for LGBT non-Western identity (see also Berry, Martin and Yue 2003; Pullen 2009; Pullen and Cooper 2010). I argue that these documentary, and “documentary-oriented”, textual moments reveal a positive sense of LGBT non-Western “becoming”. However, this sense of “orientation” for LGBTs (working towards changing ideas) is not necessarily dependent on phenomenological concerns of difference and nearness. Although, Sara Ahmed (2007) argues metaphorically that “to make [an] impression is dependent on past histories, which surface as impressions on the skin” (p. 2), the potential of LGBT transnational moves beyond notions of surface, pretext and hierarchy, challenging ideas within history and theory. Central within this is the issue of LGBT identity, as a Western construct, and the notion of power.

LGBT: universality and western subjectivity

LGBT is a problematic term used for representing socially constructed sexual diversity. Significantly, it does not include asexuality and intersexuality (see Grabham 2007; Scherrer 2008), although inevitably in defining a synonym for sexual diversity it should do so. Furthermore, the primacy of gay and lesbian discourses should be acknowledged as foundational and also as problematic within the composition of LGBT. Although identity politics (Rimmerman 2002) and issues of sexual citizenship (Bell and Binnie 2000) are central, these are founded on a gay and lesbian civil rights movement, which potentially subordinates bisexual and transgender voices. As Brett Beemyn and Erich Steinman (2002) tell us: “Since the late twentieth century, bisexuality has seemed to be both everywhere and nowhere in popular culture” (p. 3). This is evident in the contentious conflation of the oppositional identities of heterosexuality and homosexuality (see also Tucker 1995). Bisexual and transgender identities are often not an easy fit within political ideologies. As Surya Munro’s and Lorna Warren’s (2004) discussion on “transgendering citizenship” reveals, diverse models of sexual and feminist citizenship are not necessarily harmonious with transgender identity, which potentially navigates heterosexual constructs of identity more directly, especially where gender is transformed (from male to female or vice versa) rather than blended or reinvented.
Whilst, in place of LGBT, many academics employ the term “queer” not only as a theory, but also as a noun, as discussed above queer implies contrast and opposition, which reiterates notions of subjectivity. Hence, LGBT has been employed in this book as a term representing sexual diversity, which although it contains diverse subjective components, this term offers an attempt to move away from the opposition to dominant lives, towards the composition of imaginative lives. Although we note issues of coalescence within LGBT, we should not rely on the imagined coherence of these relatively disparate identity stands. Therefore, whilst the theory of the “imagined community” (see Anderson 1983) may offer some sense of bringing together which could be applicable to gay identity (see Pullen 2007, 2009; Pullen and Cooper 2010), and John D’Emillio (1983) has discussed the emergence of gay and lesbian communities as enabling political social contexts, contemporary non-Western LGBTs may not easily fit within these Western-oriented models (discussed further below). As such, this book challenges universal notions of identity, including questioning the primacy of a Western LGBT model.

Joseph Massad (2002, 2008) identifies this issue in exploring the problem of defining a universal sexual identity evident in the concept of the Gay International:

By inciting discourse on homosexual and gay and lesbian rights and identities, the very ontology of gayness is instituted in a discourse that could have only two reactions to the claims of universal gayness: support them or oppose them without ever questioning their epistemological underpinnings. (Massad 2002, p. 374)

Massad proposes that gay and lesbian identity politics, universalized within the idea of the Gay International, is limiting. Through expressing a seemingly homogenized identity, simplifications are made which, extending from a Western subjectivity based on a civil rights model, ultimately lead to confrontation, which then illuminates a binary and oppositional “East-West” divide. Massad suggests that the Gay International is nothing more than a Western-oriented discursive construct. He argues that for non-Western LGBTs this stimulates responses from those opposed to sexual diversity as acceptance or resistance, rather than encouraging investigation or comprehension. This may be supported not only by evidence from Massad criticizing organizations such as the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC 2010) and the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA 2010) as Western
centric, but also in considering the mainstream media focus played upon key identities within the Western LGBT activist movement. For example, UK-based gay rights activist Peter Tatchell, the founder of the “Outrage” movement (Outrage 2010), has been criticized for imposing his personal identity, which in one instance led to a publisher’s apology for a publication (Haritaworn, Tauquir and Erdem 2008) which allegedly criticized his political approach (see Raw Nerve Books 2011). In this sense the discursive potential of a Western-oriented LGBT movement is limiting.

This dilemma is indicative of a discursive-oriented power construct, which, although it can be enabling, relies on subjectivity. Nancy Fraser’s (1989) examination of Michel Foucault’s (1998) ideas on power tells us that:

Given its connection with the social sciences, modern power is capable, according to Foucault, of an exhaustive analysis of its objects, indeed of the entire social body .... It is more penetrating than earlier forms of power. It gets hold of its objects at the deepest level – in their gestures, habits, bodies and desires .... Taken in combination, these characteristics define the operation of modern power as what Foucault calls “self amplifying”. (p. 24)

A focus on the self is useful, as it exhibits the potential of confessional modes of discourse, revealing “self amplifying” potential. As I have discussed elsewhere (Pullen 2009), this can offer new opportunities for the expression of narrative potentials, which for gay identity might offer opportunities for “new storytelling”. Despite this, such a model of power relies on the binary relationship between the confessor and the interlocutor (see White 1992), between the person who is speaking and the authority which requires or condones the confession, and foregrounds a biased subjectivity. In this sense, as David V. Ruffolo (2009) attests, in demonstrating the problem of queer theory, “identity confessions do not articulate essential truths to the self, but reproduce heteronormative power relations that govern bodies” (p. 15). Therefore, any model of power defined through discursive agency, although productive, relies on model citizenship, or at least on relationship to citizenship, rather than on individual potential outside of such confines. As Ruffolo states regarding Foucault (1998):

Power can therefore only circulate amongst free subjects where there is always a possibility for resistance. If resistance is not possible,
power relations do not exist. A struggle is therefore not a longing to escape power relations, but a need to rework power relations. (p. 10)

Discursive emissions, however powerful, are subject-oriented and reliant on binary relationships which foreground the issue of subjectivity. In the case of contrasting Western and non-Western-oriented LGBT identity, estimations and comparisons are made which prioritize the original, or dominant, subject. Hence, the subjectivity of a Western-oriented model imposes primacy. As Ruffolo suggests, resistance, in a Foucaultian power sense, just reproduces the power dynamics, and although energy may be gained, it is embedded in the subjectivity of a Western ideal. This may particularly be evident in considering notions of colonial identity and the signification of the non-Western other as colonized, apparent within the dominance of white Western subjectivity.

The colonized other may be related to black gay identity, offering a useful analogy in considering the complex processes of othering, evident within notions of transnational and non-Western LGBT. As black media activist Marlon Riggs (1957–94) reported within his performative documentary, *Tongues Untied* (see Riggs 1991; also Pullen 2007), in exploring his early coming out and his life in San Francisco:

I pretended not to notice the absence of black images in this new gay life, in book stores, poster shops, film festivals, even in my own fantasies... In this great gay Mecca, I was the invisible man, I had no shadow, no substance, no place, no history, no reflection. (Riggs 1991, p. 202)

Riggs focuses on the lack of power and integration felt by black men within dominant ideas of the gay community and its media images. He argues that not only are black gay men devalued by a white gay male majority, to the degree that black gay males themselves adopt the dominant white narratives and neglect their racial identity, but also black men are further othered by their own racial community. Using the imagined dialogue of a dissenting black heterosexual male within *Tongues Untied* we are informed that “we need strong black men to father the black family. Now how does the homosexual help this agenda? In fact, isn’t he just part of the crisis?” Riggs foregrounds the peripheral location of black males, distanced from ideas of both gay and black community/family. The complexity of othering within LGBT non-Western, involves not only the process of self othering within in your own cultural community, which might be termed as a form of “displaced abjection” (see Stallybrass and White 1995; Pullen 2007) where one minority turns on
another (black against gay) in order to gain power, but also reveals the
primacy of a white heterosexual identity as an embedded framework
within constructions on LGBT identity.

Although LGBT transnational identity inevitably will suggest a
Western-oriented construct, I would argue following David V. Ruffolo
(2009) with regards to a “post-queer” politics that identity ideals should
move forward in the strategy of becoming (see Chapter 1). This changes
the focus, from a single (Western) subjectivity and personal desire, to
constant mobility and fluidity evident in coalescence, comingling and
transnational communion.

Structure of the book

This sense of transnational becoming is evident within the structure of
this book, within the sections of “Politics and Citizenship”, “Adaptation
and Postcolonial Transitions”, and, “Performance and Subjectivity”. This
structural flow moves between contrasting and contextual ideas,
identifying key points of engagement. This flow traverses not only a
variety of textual and contextual forms – for example, from document-
tary to fiction, from performance to subjectivity, from adaptation to re
appropriation, from citizenship to celebrity, and from colonial histories
to postcolonial transformations – but also foregrounds interdisciplinary
and intercultural approaches. In this sense, chapters are brought
together, less to define key political points, and more to offer different
ways of looking from varying perspectives.

The first section “Politics and Citizenship” explores political ideas,
citizenship agency, and notions of representation. The first chapter,
by Christopher Pullen, explores LGBT transnational identity within
documentary form, relating to issues of subjectivity. At the same
time, he foregrounds the Deleuzian (1984), and “Post Queer” (Ruffolo
2009), notion of shifting from “being” to “becoming” (Deleuze 1994),
in considering agency and “mobility”, within documentary perform-
ances. This is further evident in Rebecca Beirne’s and Samar Habib’s
chapter on documentary, where they explore the Middle East, rela-
ting Islam and opportunities for identification. Sahar Bluck offers an
insight into transsexual identity in Iran, examining key documentaries
produced there. David Oscar Harvey’s chapter explores AIDS activism
in sub-Saharan Africa, examining transnational networks evident in
Steps for the Future, a series of educational films. South Africa is also the
focus in Ernst van der Wal’s chapter, which explores the notion of the
carnival as a potential vehicle for transformation. Margaret Cooper’s
chapter directly approaches the political issue of citizenship, considering advances towards gay marriage in South America. The final chapter of this section, by Andrew Hock Soon, focuses on issues of transvestitism, foregrounding marginalization and empowerment, extending this to explore the gender-performative significances for subaltern groups.

The second section “Adaptation and Postcolonial Transitions” examines the context of commodity and reinterpretation, foregrounding Western and non-Western appropriation within postcolonial worlds. Stephanie Selvick’s chapter explores the adaptation to film of the Egyptian novel, *The Yacobian House*, foregrounding issues of orientalism. Kate Houlden’s chapter foregrounds BBC radio in relation to Andrew Salkey and the Caribbean, considering issues of sexual ambiguity. Peri Bradley considers contemporary British TV and queerness within “soap” and “reality” TV, relating the impact of new postcolonial representations. The final two chapters of this section, one by Bryce Renninger and the other by Daniel Farr and Jennifer Gauthier, examine Indian documentary and the context of colonialism. The former foregrounds economic, legislative and political contexts, while the latter considers transnationality and hybridity.

The third section, “Performance and Subjectivity”, explores notions of self and other, relative to history, community and the personal iconic. The first two chapters consider Latino films. Gus Subero examines gay male pornography produced in Latin America, considering notions of historiography and the potential for transgression in considering (white Western-oriented) dominant notions of bodily performance. Richard Reitsma offers a textual analysis of Latino queer films, which re-contextualize the “American Dream”. The following two chapters in this section, by Cüneyt Çakırlar and Serkan Ertil, respectively, foreground Turkish contexts. The former considers video art and self-representation explored through fictional characterizations, while the latter examines gender tensions relative to traditional Ottoman and Turkish theatre. Bruce Drushel’s chapter directly focuses on mainstream media, examining the television series *Star Trek* for its failure to accommodate transnational LGBT identities, particularly noting the significance of leading actor George Takei as a celebrity icon, within his process of coming out later in life. The final chapter, by Jason Ho Ka-hang, explores queer desire in Chinese and Hong Kong Cinema.

**Conclusion**

LGBT transnational identity offers promise, scope and engagement. As evidenced within the chapters of this book, diverse representations,
performances, identities and commodities offer agency and identification in establishing new ways of seeing, challenging the primacy of (Western) queer subjectivity. At the same time high-profile events are stimulating transnational responses. Barak Obama’s contribution to the “It Gets Better Project” (discussed above), and media reporting on the oppression of LGBTs in Uganda (also discussed above), reveal a complex transnational world of interconnections, possibilities and problems. In these instances Western LGBT subjectivity may be central, even if it is problematic.

The project of this book is to explore new discursive emissions relating the representations, performances and identities of transnational LGBTs. Through offering an interdisciplinary approach, foregrounding a range of theoretical stances offered by a breadth of international contributors, this book presents not only different ways of looking at different schools of thought, but also at different contexts, offering varying cultural and social positioning. This might suggest a disunited prospect but I would, however, argue that it is this bringing together of difference which offers cohesion.

Such a focus on difference as cohesion, in revealing “similar experience” as emerging LGBT transnational citizens, foregrounds the continuing dominance of the West in framing these discursive possibilities. At the same time this reveals a challenge to the West, involving temperance, energy, hybridity and becoming, shifting away from historical othering, repression, dependence and over-determination. This potentially involves what Ulrich Beck (2008) terms as the “cosmopolitan vision”, revealing a sense of boundarylessness [and an] everyday, historically alert, reflexive awareness of ambivalences in a milieu of blurring differentiations and cultural contradictions. It reveals not just the “anguish” but also the possibility of shaping one’s life and social relations under conditions of cultural mixture. (p. 3)

LGBT transnational potential is not a resolution, but it is an opening up of a dialogue. These voices are heard, not necessarily alone, and framed within transnational potential, but are realized through self reflection, and constant mobility. These are disseminations within what Beck (1992, 1993) terms as a contemporary “risk society”, indicating uncertainly and vulnerability where “rules” and “resources” are evident, but personal voices are immanent.

These voices may challenge or contextualize the West; however, I would suggest they equally offer scope in moving beyond a Western
subjectivity. This may occur in working towards “becoming” an LGBT citizen who is not defined by national borders, societies and determinations, but by the possibilities that exist within the diverse constitution of LGBT transnational identity. These possibilities, I would argue, involves not only the presentation of the personal, the intimate and the experiential, but also reveals the affirmative, the invested, and the courageous.

Notes

1. On 9 July 2010, Justin Aaberg, aged 15, killed himself. He had come out when he was 13, but was bullied at school. His mother and two brothers found his body. In September 2010, severely bullied at school, Asher Brown, aged 13, shot himself in the head, while Seth Walsh, aged 13, hanged himself, remaining in a coma for nine days before he died. In that same month, gay-identified Raymond Chase, aged 19, hanged himself in his dorm, and Billy Lucas, aged 15, who had been told by fellow students to kill himself, hanged himself in a barn later that day. Also in September, Tyler Clementi, a freshman at Rutgers University in the United States, was secretly filmed (with a male sexual partner) on a webcam by his room-mate in service of humiliation, and this was streamed on the web. On discovering the news, Tyler allegedly left a note on Facebook that he would end his life. His death appears as a suicide (see ABC News 2010; Pullen 2011).

2. The creators of the “It Gets Better Project” (2011), Dan Savage and Terry Miller, produced a book recording the most celebrated contributions (see Savage and Miller 2011).

3. This image was created by David Sullivan in tribute to those who had contributed to the “It Gets Better Project”. The image was petitioned for on the image-sharing website Flikr, and includes participants from: Australia (Victoria, Sydney and Queensland), Brazil (Campo Grande and Santa Catarina), Canada (Alberta), Germany (Berlin and Lindenberg), Italy (Bologna), Netherlands (Amsterdam), Puerto Rico, Saudia Arabia (Jedda), Serbia (Belgrade), Switzerland (Zürich), United Kingdom (Bristol, London, Nottingham, Surrey and West Sussex), and the United States (California, Georgia, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Washington D.C, and Wisconsin).

4. In discussing transnational LGBT citizens of non-Western extraction in relation to the “developed” Western world, the “developed” world would inevitably include Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. “Non-Western” however is a problematic and subjective term which relates cultural and economic evaluations, mostly oriented by the “developed” Western world. Hence, many countries in South America could be considered as developed and Western-oriented; also Japan, Russia and some countries in the Middle East could be considered this way.

5. “The world’s first legally recognized same sex marriages were performed on 14 January 2001 in Toronto. They were deemed to be legal, as of that
date, by order of the Court of Appeal for Ontario on 10 June 2003, setting off court victories across Canada [leading to national legislation offering gay marriage in July 2005]. The Netherlands became the first country to legalize same sex marriage, on 1 April 2001” (Equal Marriage 2010), with a few other European countries later offering this right (see Equal Marriage 2010). In the United States, Massachusetts adopted gay marriage in May 2004, while a number of other states have followed suit. At the time of writing, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Iowa, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont also offer same-sex marriage. While California also passed such legislation, it was rescinded under Proposition 8. Despite this, there have been attempts to overturn this vote and restore same-sex marriage there (see Ballotpedia 2010). Civil partnerships for same-sex couples commenced in the UK in December 2005, offering similar rights as married couples.

6. In varying terminology, LGBT has been extended to LGBTQI – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex (see Lawprofessors 2010). However, for the purposes of brevity, and recognizing common usage LGBT has been adopted in this book.

7. We could also consider Jeffrey Weeks et al.’s (2001) notion of “non-heterosexual” within this, as oppositional.

8. The Dissident Citizenship conference held by the University of Sussex in June 2010 focused on the controversy of this event in a central plenary panel (see Dissident Citizenship 2010).

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