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# **NOT JUST (ANY) BODY CAN BE A CITIZEN: The Politics of Law, Sexuality and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas**

**M. Jacqui Alexander**

I am an outlaw in my country of birth: a national; but not a citizen. Born in Trinidad and Tobago on the cusp of anti-colonial nationalist movements there, I was taught that once we pledged our lives to the new nation, 'every creed and race [had] an equal place.' I was taught to believe 'Massa Day Done', that there would be an imminent end to foreign domination. Subsequent governments have not only eclipsed these promises, they have revised the very terms of citizenship to exclude me. No longer equal, I can be brought up on charges of 'serious indecency' under the Sexual Offences Act of 1986, and if convicted, serve a prison term of five years. In the Bahamas, I can be found guilty of the *crime* of lesbianism and imprisoned for twenty years. In the United States of North America where I now live, I must constantly keep in my possession the immigrant (green) card given me by the American state, marking me 'legal' resident alien; non-national; non-citizen. If I traverse any of the borders of twenty-two states even *with* green card in hand, I may be convicted of crimes variously defined as 'lewd unnatural; lascivious conduct; deviate sexual intercourse; gross indecency; buggery or crimes against nature' (Robson, 1992: 58).

Why has the state marked these sexual inscriptions on my body? Why has the state focused such a repressive and regressive gaze on me and people like me? These are some of the questions I seek to understand in this paper. I wish to use this moment to look back at the state, to reverse, subvert and ultimately demystify that gaze by taking apart these racialized legislative gestures that have naturalized heterosexuality by criminalizing lesbian and other forms of non-procreative sex. It is crucial for us as feminists to understand the ways in which the state deploys power in this domain and the kinds of symbolic boundaries

it draws around sexual difference, for these are the very boundaries around which its power coheres (Hall, 1994). Indeed, 'homosexual' difference is indispensable to the creation of the putative heterosexual norm. Located, then, within the very oppositional movements which the state has outlawed, I look back as part of the ongoing and complicated process of decolonization and reconstruction of the self, a project which has been seriously disrupted in most 'postcolonial' nation-states.

I want to suggest a way of thinking about state nationalism and its sexualization of particular bodies in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas in order to determine whether such bodies are offered up, as it were, in an internal struggle for legitimation in which these post-colonial states are currently engulfed. What kinds of reassurances do these bodies provide, and for whom? The state's authority to rule is currently under siege; the ideological moorings of nationalism have been dislodged, partly because of major international political economic incursions that have in turn provoked an internal crisis of authority. I argue that in this context criminalization functions as a technology of control, and much like other technologies of control becomes an important site for the production and reproduction of state power (Heng and Devan, 1992).

Although policing the sexual (stigmatizing and outlawing several kinds of non-procreative sex, particularly lesbian and gay sex and prostitution) has something to do with sex, it is also more than sex. Embedded here are powerful signifiers about appropriate sexuality, about the kind of sexuality that presumably imperils the nation and about the kind of sexuality that promotes citizenship. Not just (any) *body* can be a citizen any more, for *some* bodies have been marked by the state as non-procreative, in pursuit of sex only for pleasure, a sex that is non-productive of babies and of no economic gain. Having refused the heterosexual imperative of citizenship, *these* bodies, according to the state, pose a profound threat to the very survival of the nation. Thus, I argue that as the state moves to reconfigure the nation it simultaneously resuscitates the nation as *heterosexual*.

Yet, the focus on state power is not to imply rationality or even internal coherence. In fact, what is evident in the legislation and in other contextual gestures surrounding it are paradoxical and contradictory ways in which the state exerts its will to power. Seemingly emancipatory practices such as legal 'protections' of women's interests or provisions which constrain violent domestic patriarchy are crafted in the same frame that disciplines and punishes people with HIV infection, and women who exercise erotic autonomy. In addition, the state moves to police the sexual and reinscribe inherited and more recently constructed meanings of masculinity and femininity, while simultaneously mediating a political economy of desire in tourism that relies upon the sexualization and commodification of women's bodies. Further, the nationalist state mediates the massive entry of transnational capital within national borders, but blames sexual decadence (lesbian and gay sex and prostitution) for the dissolution of the nation. It

may no longer be possible to understand the state purely within the boundaries of the nation because these global processes are rapidly transforming the ways that nations constitute and imagine themselves. This is why methodologically I foreground the economic and political processes of transnationalization to better examine the processes of sexualization undertaken in the legal text. The role of the imperial in transforming the national is therefore crucial.

These paradoxes raise some perplexing questions for feminist theorizing and for oppositional movements. Clearly feminist mobilizations have been successful in wresting certain concessions from the state and in inaugurating vigorous public discussion about sexualized violence. They have also challenged the state on its meaning and definitions of crisis. Yet feminists are also caught in the paradoxical discursive parameters set up by the state and end up helping to devise and monitor the state's mechanisms that surveille criminalized women. On what basis then, would solidarity work among different women be possible? Further, when one examines the effects of these transformations, it becomes clear that some areas of patriarchy have been challenged while others have been resolidified. Citizenship, for instance, continues to be premised within heterosexuality and principally within heteromascularity. In the absence of visible lesbian and gay movements, can feminist political struggles radically transform these historically repressive structures? How can women inscribe their own interests within fundamentally masculinist organizations (Irigaray, 1985).

I shall begin by reading the ways in which the heterosexual is naturalized in the legal text in order to isolate its importance to the state. In the section that follows, I analyse the ways in which naturalized heterosexuality shapes the definitions of respectability, Black masculinity and nationalism. We come full circle, then, as I argue that the effects of political economic international processes provoke a legitimation crisis for the state which moves to restore its legitimacy by recouping heterosexuality through legislation. I end by suggesting that the process of decolonization, which the nationalist state had claimed as its own, has been seriously disrupted and I draw out the implications for oppositional movements and analyses.

### **Naturalizing heterosexuality as law**

In 1986, the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago scripted and passed the Sexual Offences Act: 'An Act to Repeal and Replace the Laws of the Country relating to Sexual Crimes, to the Procurement, Abduction and Prostitution of Persons and to Kindred Offences.' This gesture of consolidation was, in the words of law commissioners, an attempt 'to bring all laws dealing with sexual offences under one heading.' It was the first time the postcolonial state confronted earlier

colonial practices which policed and scripted 'native' sexuality to help consolidate the myth of imperial authority.

Many of the thirty-five provisions of the legislation, then, had prior lives, and were being re-consolidated under a different schedule of punishments. Prohibitions regarding sexual violence within the family (incest), and against women who exchanged sex for money (prostitutes) and those who aided them (brothel-keepers), or those who exploited them (pimps) had long been established in the emendations to the Offences Against the Person Acts, that one-sided pivot of British jurisprudence. In keeping with its allegiance to hegemonic masculinity, the script upheld a prior provision that defined anal intercourse between men as buggery, outlawed it, and affixed a penalty of ten years imprisonment, if convicted. It moved, in addition, to criminalize new areas of sexual activity. Established were prohibitions against employers who took sexual advantage of their minor employees at the workplace, and against men who had sex with fourteen- to sixteen-year-old girls, who would now be guilty of a statutory offence. For the first time, a category called rape within marriage was established and criminalized: 'Any "husband" who had forceful intercourse with his "wife" without her consent' could be convicted and imprisoned for fifteen years under a new offence called sexual assault; and sex between women became punishable by five years under a new offence called "serious indecency", if committed on or towards a person sixteen years or more.'

Three years later, the parliament of the Bahamas scripted and passed its own version of the Sexual Offences Act, cited as the 'Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act of 1989', *its* gesture of consolidation, formulated by law commissioners 'as an attempt to provide one comprehensive piece of legislation setting out sexual offences which are indictable', seeking, in its words, 'to make better provision in respect of the rights in the occupation of the matrimonial home.' As in the case of Trinidad and Tobago, it was the first attempt to impose a veiled sexual order on the chaotic legacy of colonialism. The commission had hoped to deal not only with this chaos, but also with the disruptions and violence of conjugal relations by reasserting the primacy of the matrimonial home and the rights of 'any person' residing therein.

Its thirty-one provisions bore close resemblance to those of Trinidad and Tobago in terms of the injunctions, prohibitions and schedule of punishments against prostitution, incest, and sexual harassment and assault in the workplace. It too, conflated buggery, bestiality and criminality: 'If any two persons are guilty of the crime of buggery – an unnatural crime, or if any person is guilty of unnatural connection with any animal, every such person is guilty of an offence and liable to imprisonment for twenty years.' This definition resembles the first civil injunction against sodomy that was legislated in 1533 in Henry VIII's parliament (Cohen: 1989). In its injunction against sex between women, it abandoned the coyness of the Trinidad legislature in favour of an explicit approach that pronounced, criminalized and penalized a sexual

activity in one single gesture: 'Any female who has sexual intercourse with another female, whether with or without the consent of that female, is guilty of the offence of lesbianism and is liable to imprisonment for twenty years.' Similarly, under restrictive stipulations that were an exact replication of those in Trinidad, it moved to criminalize violent marital sex, but fell short of calling it rape. The legislation asserted: 'Any person who has sexual intercourse with his spouse without the consent of the spouse is guilty of the offence of sexual assault and liable to imprisonment for fifteen years.' The law also moved to imprison (for five years) anyone with HIV infection who had consensual sex without disclosing their HIV status.

Its new provision, relating to domestic violence, made it possible for *any* party in the marriage to apply to the Supreme Court for an injunction that would restrain the other party from molestation and from using violence in the matrimonial home. What is remarkable about this act that calls itself a domestic violence act is that nowhere is there a definition of domestic violence. Rather the majority of the provisions focus upon the disposition of private property and on the minute distinctions among 'dwelling, estate, apartment', etc. These were not the terms on which the women's movement in the Bahamas had pushed for the criminalization of domestic violence. Over a five-year period, women held public rallies, campaigned door to door and gained more than 10,000 signatures and the knowledge from women's experiences of physical and sexual violence against themselves and their daughters. It would seem then, that even in the face of violent disruptions in marriage, conjugal heterosexuality is most concerned with the patrilineal transfer of private property.

Legislative gestures fix conjugal heterosexuality in several ways. Generally, they collapse identities into sexual bodies which, in the particular case of lesbian and gay people, serves to reinforce a fiction about promiscuity: that sex is all of what we do and consequently the slippage, it is all of who we are. Yet lesbian and gay sex, the 'pervert', the 'unnatural' are all indispensable to the formulation of the 'natural', the conjugal, the heterosexual. This dialectic must be made visible, for there is no absolute set of commonly understood or accepted principles called the 'natural' which can be invoked definitionally except as they relate to what is labelled 'unnatural'. Here is a remarkably circular definition of sexual intercourse that was attached as a supplementary note to the Trinidad and Tobago Act:

[The Clauses] do not necessarily define 'sexual intercourse' but give a characteristic of it. 'Sexual intercourse' means natural sexual intercourse in the clauses relating to rape and other offences of sexual intercourse with women, whereas the clause concerned with buggery relates to unnatural sexual intercourse.

Heterosexual sex, even while dysfunctional (as in rape in marriage, domestic violence and incest), assumes the power of natural law only in

relation to sex which is defined in negation to it (what natural sexual intercourse is not) and in those instances where desire presumably becomes so corrupt that it expresses itself as bestiality. In other words, heterosexual practices carry the weight of the natural only in relational terms and ultimately, one might argue, only in its power to designate as unnatural those practices which disrupt marriage and certain dominant notions of conjugal family. Beyond that, sexual intercourse remains necessarily, remarkably unclarified.

Conjugal heterosexuality is frozen within a very specific and narrow set of class relations between 'husband' and 'wife' in 'marriage', narrow because the majority of heterosexual relationships are in fact organized outside of this domain. Even while the Bahamian legislation might appear to address violence in all 'domestic' domains, its skewed emphasis on private property immediately renders it class specific. For working-class women who do not own property and are beaten by the men with whom they live, this legislation offers no protection. And even for middle-class and upper-middle-class women who are beaten by their husbands and might own property, the problem they face is how to disentangle the web of well-connected social relationships that protect *their* middle-class and upper-middle-class husbands from being prosecuted as criminals. For most women who stand outside of the legal definitions of 'parties to a marriage', they can make no claims for relief from the state. Thus, domestic violence works as a proxy for class and facilitates the reallocation of private property in disruptive conjugal marriage.

Both pieces of legislation systematically conflate violent heterosexual domination, such as rape and incest, with same-sex relations, thereby establishing a continuum of criminality among same sex rape, domestic violence, adultery, fornication and dishonesty. On this continuum the psyche of homosexuality becomes the psyche of criminality. By criminalizing perverted heterosexual sex, the legislation aims to expunge criminal elements from the heterosexual so that it could return to its originary and superior moral position. However, homosexuality, inherently perverse, could only be cleansed by reverting to heterosexuality. And still, not all heterosexualities are permissible: not the prostitute with an irresponsible, 'non-productive' sexuality, and not young women whom the state defines as girls requiring its protection.

Outside the boundaries of the legislation, yet informing it, state managers generated a simultaneous discourse invoking nostalgia for a Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago when there were ostensibly no lesbians, gay men and people with AIDS. In this move, heterosexuality becomes coterminus with and gives birth to the nation. Its antithesis can unravel the nation. The state has eroticized the dissolution of the nation, producing apocalyptic (mythic) visions of dread disease and destruction (paralleled in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah) brought about by prostitution and the practice of lesbian and gay sex. Yet, it simultaneously enacts the dissolution of the nation through a series of political-economic gestures (adherence to the narratives and

practices of modernization through allegiance to multinational capital, tourism, etc.) that it ideologically recodes as natural, even supernatural, as the salvation of the people. In this equation, tourism, foreign multi-national capital production and imperialism are as integral and as necessary to the natural order as heterosexuality. But before examining these twin processes of sexualization and internationalization more closely, one would have to understand why conjugal heterosexuality is so important for nationalist state managers and the role it plays in constituting respectable masculinity. We would have to understand the sexual inheritances of nationalism as well as the new meanings of masculinity and femininity the nationalist state has invented.

### **State nationalism and respectability, Black masculinity come to power 1962, 1972**

Women, and all signs of the feminine, are by definition always already anti-national (Heng, 1992).

It would be difficult to map the minute and nuanced ways in which colonial hegemonic definitions of masculinity and femininity insinuated themselves throughout the variety of political, economic, social and cultural structures in history. We can, however, frame these definitions by examining what Kobena Mercer and Isaac Julien have called the 'hegemonic repertoire of images' which have been forged through the histories of slavery and colonization in order to identify the sexual inheritances of Black nationalism as well as its own inventions. (Mercer and Julien, 1988: 132–5). I am not suggesting that ideologies simply get foisted onto people (Burawoy, 1982), for there is always an ongoing struggle to redefine power. What is crucial for my argument, however, is the intransigence of dominance and, in this instance, the continuities and discontinuities between the practices of the colonial and the 'postcolonial' around those very images.

In the repertoire of images that developed during the organization of slave-plantation economy and in the consolidation of imperial rule, the English gentleman was given primacy. In Trinidad and Tobago white militarized masculinity had to concede the right to rule to the civilian who would displace the importance of war and the more visible signs of policing and terror. Similarly in the Bahamas, the pirate, the rogue and the wrecker (white predatory masculinity) were engaged in a protracted struggle with the English gentleman for cultural and economic authority until the latter was installed as representative of the crown in 1718. It marked the triumph of respectability and honour over the boorish, the disreputable (Saunders, 1990: 2).

Colonial rule simultaneously involved racializing and sexualizing the population, which also meant naturalizing whiteness. There could

really be no psycho-social codices of sexuality that were not simultaneously raced. In general terms, these codices functioned as mythic meta-systems fixing polarities, contradictions and fictions while masked as truth about character. 'Laws for the governing of Negroes, Mulattoes and Indians' (Saunders, 1990: 8; Goveia, 1970) made it possible for white masculinity to stand outside the law. As the invisible subject of the law, he was neither prosecuted nor persecuted within it. Since it was lawful to reinforce the ontological paradox of slave as chattel, Elizabethan statutes of rape operated to legitimize violent colonial masculinity which was never called rape, yet criminalized black masculinity for rape. This would solidify the cult of true womanhood and its correlates, the white madonna (untouchable) and the Black whore (promiscuous).

Here too, identities were collapsed into bodies. Black bodies, the economic pivot of slave-plantation economy, were sexualized. Black women's bodies evidenced an unruly sexuality, untamed and wild. Black male sexuality was to be feared as the hypersexualized stalker. These dominant constructions worked to erase indigenous (Lucayan, Carib and Arawak) sexualities. Indentured Indian femininity (in Trinidad and Tobago) was formulated as dread and desire, mysteriously wanton, inviting death and destruction, although it could also be domesticated. Indian manliness was unrestrained, violent and androgynous, the latter construction drawn from Britain's colonial experience in India. Free coloured women, who outnumbered Black women in the Bahamas, and their counterparts in Trinidad and Tobago who were believed anxious to 'acquire property and wealth by inheriting land for the natural white fathers', were also sexualized, but positioned as potential mates (Saunders, 1990: 18, 19; McDaniel, 1986). Even with these differences in the construction of 'native' sexualities, however, colonized sexualities were essentially subordinated sexualities.

It would indeed require a complicated set of cognitive and ideological reversals for the British to turn the savage into the civilized, to turn those believed incapable of rule into reliable rulers. Herein lies the significance of socialization into British norms, British manners, British parliamentary modes of governance; into conjugal marriage and the 'science' of domesticity. This would operate in effect as socialization into respectability which George Mosse argues emerged in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century with the beginnings of modern nationalism. He argues that respectability emerged in alliance with sexuality and helped to shape middle-class beliefs about the body, sexual (mis)conduct, normality and abnormality, about virility and manly bearing. The control over sexuality evidenced in the triumph of the nuclear family was vital to respectability (Mosse, 1985: 2-10). Whereas in Europe these processes were indigenous to the formation of the middle class, in the Caribbean it was imported through imperialism. The Black middle class would be schooled in the definitions of morality, civility and respectable citizenship in the metropolis, in the company of the British, while 'women of reduced means' and the working class

would be trained at 'home'. Specialized training schools like the Dundas Civic Center in the Bahamas were established at the turn of this century to prepare cooks, general maids and hotel workers; and the Trinidad and Tobago Home Industries and Women's Self Help Organization and the Oleander Club of the Bahamas would train Black women in housewifery, cooking, sewing and knitting (Saunders, 1990; Reddock, 1984: 245).

It was the élites of the middle class who established the nationalist parties which later became part of the state apparatus. They mobilized consensus for nation building, moulded psychic expectations about citizenship and therefore consolidated their own internal power on the ideals of sovereignty, self-determination and autonomy from foreign mandates. Ostensibly this was a neutered invocation to citizenship; yet it was in the creation of the women's wing of these parties and in their organization of 'culture' that one begins to detect a gendered call to patriotic duty. Women were to fiercely defend the nation by protecting their honour, by guarding the nuclear, conjugal family, 'the fundamental institution of the society', by guarding 'culture' defined as the transmission of a fixed set of proper values to the children of the nation, and by mobilizing on the party's behalf into the far reaches of the country. She was expected to represent and uphold a respectable femininity and, in so doing, displace the figure of the white madonna. Patriotic duty for men, on the other hand, consisted in rendering public service to the country, and in adopting the mores of respectability. Thus, we can identify a certain trajectory in the establishment of nationalism which is grounded in notions of respectability, which like eighteenth-century European nationalism came to rely heavily upon sexual gestures that involved the *symbolic* triumph of the nuclear family over the extended family and other family forms.

In order to demonstrate that it had 'graduated from all schools of constitutional, economic and social philosophies' (Pindling, 1972), and that it could comport itself with 'discipline, dignity, and decorum, with the eyes of the world upon us' (Williams, 1962), Black nationalist masculinity needed to demonstrate that it was now capable of ruling, which is to say, it needed to demonstrate moral rectitude, particularly on questions of paternity. This required distancing itself from irresponsible Black working-class masculinity that spawned the 'bastard', the 'illegitimate', and that thus had to be criminalized for irresponsible fatherhood by the British. It also required distancing itself from, while simultaneously attempting to control, Black working-class femininity that ostensibly harboured a profligate sexuality: the 'Jezebel' and the whore who was not completely socialized into housewifery, but whose labour would be mobilized to help consolidate popular nationalism. Of significance is the fact that Black nationalist masculinity could aspire toward imperial masculinity and, if loyal enough, complicitous enough, could be knighted (Craton, 1986: 29), although it could never be enthroned. It could never become king.

If, as Toni Morrison has suggested, rescue and indebtedness

sometimes sediment as part of the psychic residue of the process of colonization, then respectability might well function as debt payment for rescue from incivility and from savagery (Morrison, 1992: vii–xxx). But a rescued masculinity is simultaneously an injured masculinity; a masculinity that does not emerge from the inherited conditions of class and race privilege. And it is injured in a space most vulnerable to colonial constructions of incivility. At one time subordinated, that masculinity now has to be earned, and then appropriately conferred. Acting through this psychic residue, Black masculinity continues the policing of sexualized bodies, drawing out the colonial fiction of locating subjectivity in the body (as a way of denying it), as if the colonial masters were still looking on, as if to convey legitimate claims to being civilized. Not having dismantled the underlying presuppositions of British law, Black nationalist men, now with some modicum of control over the state apparatus, continue to preside over and administer the same fictions.

To the extent that the sexual offences legislation polices non-productive, 'non-productive' sex especially in relationship to women, the neutered invocation to citizenship becomes transparent. In fact we can read state practices as attempts to propagate fictions of feminine identity, to reconfigure women's desire and subjectivity and to link the terms of the nation's survival to women's sexual organs. This is what Geraldine Heng calls, in the specific case of Singapore, 'the development of a sexualised, separate species of nationalism, a nationalism generated from the productive source of the womb.' To understand it in Heng's terms, the indictment of prostitutes and lesbians inscribes 'a tacit recognition that feminine reproductive sexuality refuses, and in refusing registers a suspicion of that sexuality as non-economic, in pursuit of its own pleasure, sexuality for its own sake, unproductive of babies, unproductive of social and economic efficiency' (Heng and Devan, 1992: 343–64). It registers a suspicion of an unruly sexuality, omnipotent and omniscient enough to subvert the economic imperatives of the nation's interests. From the point of view of the state, it is a sexuality that has to be disciplined and regulated in order that it might become economically productive.

State claims of a non-productive femininity are deceptive in a number of different ways. Both the People's National Movement (PNM of Trinidad and Tobago) and the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP of the Bahamas) could not have consolidated their power or secured support for popular nationalism without women's labour, women who ironically would later have to struggle for citizenship. Yet once installed, state nationalism came to stand in an authorial relationship to women's interests and women's agency. The claim also works to mask women's labour in other areas of the economy, particularly in the tourist sector where women are the majority of a proletarianized and superexploited workforce. Capital accumulations from sex tourism and prostitution have been hidden, but given what we know about tourism and postcolonialism in South East Asia, it would be most plausible to assume that for the Bahamas in particular, there would be substantial

(although now unacknowledged) accumulation from prostitutes' labour (Truong, 1990: 158–91). Further, women's unpaid labour compensates for the state's refusal to expand the social wage and for the disjunctures brought about by the adoption of structural adjustment programmes. It is to these questions I turn in the following section.

### **(Inter)national boundaries and strategies of legitimation**

I wish to foreground the effects of international political economic processes in provoking the legitimacy crisis nationalist states are currently confronting, and argue that the sexual is pivotal in state orchestration of a new internal struggle whose contours are different now than they were at the moment of flag independence. In an almost ideal-typical sense, the nation had come to be shaped by what it had opposed (Anderson, 1983). Public opposition to the British had provided powerful ideological fodder for independence. We had all suffered colonial injustice together, and it was out of that experience of collective suffering that a collective vision of sovereignty could be built. Since 'independence', the state has colluded in adopting strategies that have locked these nations into a world economic and political system, the effect of which is re-colonization. The internal effects of internationalization blur the boundaries of the nation; they do not constitute anything unique anymore. Further, the reproduction of private accumulation by members of the indigenous bourgeoisie has been stifled (Gibbon, 1992), local patronage networks have been disrupted and people's material and communal lives have dramatically deteriorated. Paradoxically, these same states simultaneously preside over the transfer of substantial profits to metropolitan countries. All of these effects replicate the racialized colonial pattern of poverty, private ownership and lack of access to resources. These are the very grounds on which oppositional movements have challenged the state; it is the reason that its moral claim to leadership is unravelling.

But this is not how state managers see the crisis. Both in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas they sound the danger of cultural contamination from the 'West' which they depict simultaneously as sexual intemperance, the importation of AIDS and the importation of feminism (read lesbianism). The Bahamian state has invoked an impending population crisis, positioned Haitian communities as 'immigrants', 'refugees' and repositories of crime. It has vindicated its use of military and police force to expel Haitians from the nation's borders by claiming that they are no longer legitimate citizens; they imperil the nation. There are other strategies as well, ranging from policing oppositional movements and subtle, yet coercive ideological violence where Bahamian people, for instance, believe that the ballot is not a secret ballot and fear reprisals from the state. Individual state managers develop a patronage system to build their own authority in their

own political interests, not necessarily consolidating support for nationalism, but for themselves and for their political parties.

State nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas has neither reformulated nor transformed the fundamental premises upon which economic and material exchange is based. Its secular adherence to a linear definition of 'development' and progress has continued to imagine an (il)logic of a movement from 'tradition' to 'modernity' in which industrialization presumably serves as the motor for economic success. The contemporary version of development now called structural adjustment, finds expression in a powerful, yet unequal alliance among foreign multinational lending agencies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the American state and neo-colonial regimes. Their aim is to impose a set of lending arrangements that would ostensibly reduce the foreign debt through a combination of economic measures to accelerate foreign investment, boost foreign-exchange earnings through export, and reduce government deficits through cuts in spending (McAfee, 1991:67-79). In particular, the programmes have been organized to reduce local consumption by devaluing currency, increasing personal taxes and reducing wages. The economy becomes privatized through state subsidies to private vendors, lowering taxes and providing tax holidays for foreign multinational corporations, expanding investments in tourism, dismantling state-owned enterprises, and curtailing the scope of state bureaucratic power by reducing the workforce and reducing the social wage – those expenditures for a range of social services for which the state had previously assumed some responsibility.

Although the Bahamas has not formalized 'structural adjustment' programmes (SAP), the continued subordination of its economy to the political and economic imperatives of the United States of North America has resulted in an economic infrastructure that bears all the marks of a country that has actually adopted structural adjustment. The most dramatic shift is evident in the displacement of capital and labour forces from agrarian production to service which now employs more than 50 per cent of the workforce, massive increases in the size of the food import bill (people are no longer able to feed themselves), the consolidation of foreign transnational capital in the tourist industry (hotels, airlines, services and tour operators, international finance capital, real estate), and the expansion of off-shore companies.

But perhaps the most significant and dramatic effect of SAP is that it has exacerbated the triple processes of proletarianization superexploitation and feminization of the workforce which began in the mid 1960s. By proletarianization I am referring not only to the influx, or even the magnitude of industrial capital, or the making of a gendered, racialized working class, but perhaps more importantly to the access that capital has in exploiting and even expelling relatively large percentages of the workforce. What makes this impact so profound for the nation in both Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas is the small

size of the workforce (Rothenberg and Wishner, 1978). In the Bahamas, industrial capital has access to a sizeable portion of the workforce. More than 65% of the working population is employed in service with women comprising more than 73% of all workers, performing jobs such as housekeepers, cooks, maids, cleaners and laundresses. Two-thirds of these women earn incomes of \$7,000 annually. Of the total workforce, 22% have never been employed. Women's unemployment, which has always been higher than men's, is 13%, and that of men is 11.7% and steadily increasing.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the process of proletarianization which began in the 1970s has had different, yet similar effects. Private capital employs roughly the same amount of the workforce as the state, 36% and 38% respectively. Areas such as construction, the impetus for proletarianization in the 1970s, have experienced severe retrenchment. This is particularly affecting women whose rate of unemployment in that sector is now 73%, compared to the national average of 46%. (Henry and Williams, 1991: 315). Like the Bahamas, there has been a significant growth in the service sector, but it has come from self-employment and within the state bureaucracy where women work as clerical workers, nurses, teachers and maids. State retrenchments under IMF restrictions have increased women's unemployment. The overall unemployment rate in Trinidad and Tobago is 19%; women's unemployment rate is 23%.

Gendered superexploitation can best be assessed by the gap between workers' real wages and the profit which capital accrues and never returns to the workforce. Overall, the rate of return from the United States' investment in the Caribbean is considerably higher (31% to 14.3%) than the returns generated from investments in other parts of the world (Barry, 1984: 19). In the Bahamas, almost three-fourths of households (74%) live on an annual income of \$10,000. Of these households, almost all (82%) are headed by women, at least half of whom are employed in the tourist industry. In contrast, earnings from tourism contributed 61% of the total export earnings of the Bahamian state (Rosensweig, 1988: 89–100). The limitations of tourism as a national economic strategy are immediately apparent with the recognition that 81 cents of every tourist dollar spent in the Bahamas finds its way back to the United States (Barry, 1984).

In the space between foreign- and state-controlled export has arisen a substantial informal economy that operates at different levels. Some elements of it are masculinized, particularly those in the drug trade that are linked to tourism. This marks another incursion on state control because people can make quick money and improve their standard of living. Drug lords can command authority and develop a horizontal patronage system that rivals that of state managers, while simultaneously remaining outside the arm of state regulation. In fact, state managers have had to deal with an erosion of their own credibility because of their complicity in the drug trade – one of the many faces of the underside of respectability (Smith, Gomez and Willes, 1984). Not

labelled an illegal activity by the state, the feminized informal economy is involved in trade and marketing, relying on kinship, long-established peer networks and communal ties. Much like farmers' co-operatives, these networks provide for people's everyday needs.

It is difficult to imagine that these massive economic disjunctures with corresponding deterioration in the quality of people's daily lives, precipitated by SAP, would not provoke a major political crisis for the state. Emerging within this crisis are serious contestations to the state's right to rule. The question is how do these movements frame their opposition to the state? Even with the importance of material struggles in people's lives, one of the more crucial elements uniting these varied constituencies is the urgency to move beyond questions of survival to, as Joan French has argued, 'creating, building community, deepening the understanding of oneself and of others, developing local, regional, and international structures for communication and participation' (McAfee, 1991:188). The focus of the challenges, therefore, is to transform the nature and definition of development from profit and exploitation to holistic, participatory models, the maps of which are still being worked out (Antrobus in McAfee, 1991:187). Not surprisingly, the most sustained, organized challenges have originated within non-governmental organizations, a loose affiliation of groups of trade unions, churches and grass-roots organizations. Farmers' co-operatives not only challenge the state with a model of collective agricultural production, very dissimilar to the corporate profit model, but also, under difficult conditions, they are doing what the state has refused to do: feed the population. A regional feminist movement in the Caribbean as a whole and specific movements in both countries have developed some of the most sustained critiques of the devastating effects of structural adjustment as state violence. They have argued that unemployment has destroyed the identity of the male 'provider' resulting in increased violence against women for which they hold the state accountable.

### **State nationalism, globalization and privatization**

State-supported globalization of capital is crucial not only because of the internal political effects I outlined earlier, but also because these international processes help to refigure definitions of masculinity and femininity and simultaneously undermine the ideological bases upon which the state organizes, separates and draws from the 'public' and 'private' domains. International practices dovetail with state ideologies about masculinity and femininity, and in particular with ideological constructions of women's work. The most significant retrenchment with the adoption of SAP has taken place in those sectors which have been historically coded as women's work: health, clinic and hospital service, caring for the sick and elderly, social services and education. As women continue their work in the home and their work in the private or public service sector, they work, in addition, to care for the sick and elderly,

and to continue the education of their children without state subsidies. The state relies upon and operates within these dominant constructions of a servile femininity, perennially willing and able to serve, a femininity that can automatically fill the gaps left by the state. Quite the opposite of a 'non-productive' femininity drawn in the legislation, these are women doing work, and ironically, state work.

International ideological registers are significant in another important regard that has to do with the presumed disjuncture between the 'public' and 'private' spheres. In one sense, one of the effects of a privatized state is that it becomes somewhat insulated from 'public' demands; what was 'public' responsibility is now shifted elsewhere, in this case on to women who compensate for retrenchment in both spheres. But there is also a paradoxical collapse of this dichotomy, for the state is now relying upon the private – private capital and private households to consolidate its own quest for economic and political power. We know that the household has been an important ideological instrument for the state. It has been indispensable in the creation of the 'public' against which it can be positioned. Because it has been an important space where a particular kind of hierarchical, patriarchal power has resided, the state must move to rehabilitate this sphere by specifically recoding women's experience of domestic violence and rape within it, and generally, by disallowing any household space for lesbians. Yet state economic practices are contributing to the demise of the 'male breadwinner' especially in working-class and working-poor households which are the ones hardest hit by SAP, and in a racialized context are actually intervening to fix racial polarities as well.

We can now return to one of the central paradoxes this paper raises, that of the nationalist state legislating against certain sexualities while relying upon women's sexualized body and a political economy of desire in private capital accumulation. Tourism is the arena in which the moves to privatize the economy through foreign investment, imperial constructions of masculinity and femininity and state constructions of sexualized woman all intersect.

The significance of tourism is that it foregrounds sexual pleasure as a commodity, based in the sexualization of land (through the old imperial trope woman-as-nation) and people. The sinister drama finds expression in commercial advertising and the production of certain fetishes that get signified as 'culture'. Bahama Mama, (there is no Bahama Papa) is a buxom, caricatured, hypersensualized figure that can be bought in the Bahamas; she can also be consumed as 'hot and spicy sausage' at any 'Nice and Easy' convenient store in the United States. Tourists upon their return home can continue to be intoxicated by the Bahamas, order Bloody Mary along with Bahama Mama, alterity as instrument of pleasure. European fantasies of colonial conquest, the exotic, the erotic, the dark, the primitive, of danger, dread and desire all converge here on virgin beaches and are traced back through the contours of imperial geography.

How does one prepare citizens for self-determination and for

dependency on its antithesis, tourism, the practice of servility and serviceability, the production of maids, washers, cooks? Black women who must braid white women's hair in the market as they flirt with Blackness, for African styles can only be adopted far away from home. Difference is exotically and fleetingly adopted. These are a complicated set of psycho-sexual gestures converging in this (hetero)sexual playground; this arena which Caribbean state managers see as the economy of the future; where Black masculinity manages phantasmic constructions of Black femininity, satisfying white European desire for restless adventure, satisfying white European longing for what is 'rare and intangible' (hooks, 1992: 21–39).

### **Mobilizing heterosexuality: post-colonial states and practices of decolonization**

My analysis suggests that the archetypal source of state legitimation is anchored in the heterosexual family, the form of family crucial in the state's view to the founding of the nation. This consolidation of domesticity in the very process of nation-building is the sphere in which a certain kind of instrumental legitimation is housed. There is an evident relationship among monogamous heterosexuality (organic representation of sexuality) nationhood and citizenship. Although presumably universal and falling on *every* body, we have seen that it is not just *every* and *any* body, for *some* bodies are not productive enough for the nation. The erosion of heterosexual conjugal monogamy is a perennial source of worry for state managers and so it is invoked and deployed particularly at moments when it is threatened with extinction. Nothing should threaten this sphere; not the single woman, the lesbian, the gay man, the prostitute, the person who is HIV infected. The state must simultaneously infiltrate this domain in order to recoup its original claim to it. It must continue to legislate its existence.

To whom do state managers believe they have access in mobilizing discourses around conservative, homophobic registers? Do they believe that a large number of citizens can be mobilized in its defence? Clearly, this mobilization serves to reassure different constituencies which historically have been important anchoring points for the state, but have currently lost political ground with feminist critiques of patriarchy. It serves to reassure men, for they are the archetypal citizen, conservative elements and religious constituencies in a context in which the religious provides important explanations for daily life, and in the case of the Bahamas, the potential tourist who presumably would not encounter diseased black bodies during his travels. With the globalization of specific definitions of morality, the state believes itself able to conform to the international, and in its view to widely accepted and respectable definitions of morality. Even with efforts to reinvoke patriarchal modes of behaviour and patterns of thinking that are familiar and secure, these nationalist states have not been able to solve their legitimation crisis.

Part of the difficulty we face as feminists doing this kind of analysis, and ironically one of the reasons the state can at least be partially successful in mobilizing heterosexuality, is the persistence of the belief in naturalized heterosexuality, the belief that it lies outside of the sphere of political and economic influence and therefore state influence. In the absence of any visible lesbian and gay movements in the Caribbean, state managers believe they can rely upon heterosexuality even more heavily. Our analyses and mobilizations of the naturalization of heterosexuality have perhaps lagged behind analyses of naturalization in other areas, like women's work, for example. We face a challenge to traverse inherited analytic boundaries that have kept us within discrete and narrow formulations. Radical lesbian and gay movements in metropolitan countries which have demystified heterosexuality, must now take on board analyses of colonization and imperialism, for the effects of these processes loop back to the centre from which they originated. These movements in metropolitan countries need to work assiduously, however, not to reproduce practices of imperialism. If feminists have analysed the masculinization of the state, it is imperative that we also analyse the heterosexualization of the state, for these are twin processes. The urgency of a research and political agenda that continues to make the processes of heterosexualization transparent, tying them to both national and international social interests cannot, therefore, be overstated. If sexualization and internationalization have been linked in the strategies of domination, we must link them in our strategies for liberation, although admittedly along different registers (Moraga, 1983). It might help to reduce the impulse to conflate capitalism with democracy and the more pervasive feminist theorizing of liberal *democratic* advanced capitalist states.

More work needs to be done in disentangling the state from the nation and in figuring out differing interests. If indeed our political mobilizations are located between the spaces of state and nation, even state and party, we would need to be clearer about our allegiances and the political bases of solidarity. The analysis should help point to the political responsibility feminists inside the state apparatus have to those on the outside. At the same time, we cannot diminish the intensity of our demands to make the state more accountable.

It is both analytically, and therefore politically necessary to disentangle the processes of decolonization and nation-building. In a real sense, the work of decolonization (the dismantling of the economic, political, psychic and sexual knowledges and practices that accompanied the first five hundred years of conquest) has been disrupted, especially in light of the map I have drawn of these new sexualized strategies of recolonization and the commodification of alienated sexual desire in tourism within nation-states that are infiltrated by corporate globalization politics. The work of decolonization consists as well in the decolonization of the body. Women's bodies have been ideologically dismembered within different discourses: the juridical; profit maximization; religious; and the popular.

How do we, in our alternative movements, construct a collectively imagined future that takes account of these dismemberments, fractures, migrations, exiles and displacements that have been part of these processes of domination? How do we construct home when home is not immediately understood nor instinctively accessible? Our challenge within oppositional movements is to invent home in different spaces that cross geography. We cannot afford to let the international be one-sidedly pernicious.

## Notes

M. Jacqui Alexander is currently involved in researching questions relating to the historical construction of sexuality (particularly its legal production) in the Caribbean. An anti-racist worker, she is now at the New School for Social Research in New York City where she teaches courses grounded in feminist critiques of imperialism, colonialism and heterosexuality. An essay exploring the processes of sexualization in the Bahamas is forthcoming in a collection (co-edited with Chandra Talpade Mohanty, spring 1995) entitled *Histories, Movements, Identities: Genealogies of Third World Feminism*, New York: Routledge.

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