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Alienating Affect: The Cultural Politics of Hate Crimes

Abstract: This paper examines new configurations of sexuality and raciality in a West European context of 'LGBT rights', racism and war. It reads sexual citizenship as not only coincidental or side by side with the wars in Asia, the backlash against multiculturalism in Britain, the gentrification of migrant neighbourhoods in the German metropolises, and the increased policing of inner-city and post/migrant populations in London and Berlin. Rather, war and racism are conceptualised as sexually productive and sexually produced. As queer knowledges and aesthetics of a liberated 'West' and phobic 'Rest' are invited into public circulation, LGBT politics, too, are shaped in ever closer proximity to the state, which enters sexual spaces as equal-opportunities employer, protector and patron.

The paper interrogates the new demand for hate crimes legislation in Germany. Imported from the US and Britain, these demands are represented as direct responses to a moral panic on 'migrant homophobia' co-authored in close intertextuality by gay activists, academics, journalists and the state. I examine the genealogy of hate crimes with the failed 'Muslim Test', which tested the 'homophobicness' of applicants with previous nationalities in countries considered Muslim. Homophobia and transphobia are Orientalised in these debates, as outside and prior to German modernity. As hate is located firmly elsewhere, in the bodies of 'affect aliens' (Sara Ahmed) to be kept out or locked in, new publics become imaginable, whose claims to sexual tolerance and freedom require critical examination.