

Decolonial Erotics: Power Bottoms, Topping from Bottom Space, and the Emergence of a Queer Sexual Theology

Feminist Theology
2018, Vol. 26(3) 286–296
© The Author(s) 2018
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0966735018756255
journals.sagepub.com/home/ftth



Robyn Henderson-Espinoza

Abstract

Indecent Theology has provided both Feminist Theology and Liberation Theology with new contours for rethinking bodies, power, dominance, and submission. With regard to the logic of dominance that radically pushes the margins of the margins into a form of inexistent living, I suggest a material turn to rethink the contours that are evoked with Indecent Theology. Materialism has long stood as a philosophy opposing the overwhelming dominance of language and the poststructuralist emphasis that has emerged as the 'linguistic turn'. Considering 'new materialism' as a theoretical platform to reread Indecent Theology provides theologies and ethics an opportunity to re-imagine indecent methodologies through indecency, a sort of ethical perversion. I suggest an indecent turn in mobilizing materialism and kink as theories to reread indecent theology for a productive queer materialist sexual theology. The feminist liberation theology of Marcella Althaus-Reid pushes both feminism and liberation into new contours of power and submission and initiates new contours of queer sexuality into the discourse. When analysing Althaus-Reid's work, we are brought to attention to the margins of the margins, an awareness of the struggle for power and control by those deemed less than. There are contours of power at and in the margins of the margins, those who occupy 'bottom space'. From a kink/BDSM orientation, I propose to reread Althaus-Reid's feminist liberation theology as decolonial erotics that helps to generate a productive materialist queer sexuality. The overarching methodology of this article is a quasi-auto ethnographic investigation into the ways in which the contours of race, class, gender, sex, sexuality, and ability affect power and submission and in turn reframes both queer theology and queer sexuality that is rooted in the living out of a very particular theology and ethics, which is rooted in queer relating. Theology can neither materialize in a vacuum nor in isolation. An indecent turn to (wards) a queer sexual theology that is rooted in a queer relationality demands attention to the interdependence of queer relating that is materialized through the interdependency of the growing queer desires of bodies, power, dominance, and submission.

Corresponding author:

Robyn Henderson-Espinoza

Email: irobyn@me.com

Keywords

Bodies, power, sex, queer, relationality, queer theology, queer ethics, BDSM

Introduction

On the last day of the Philly Trans Health Conference, I woke to the news of the Pulse Night Club shooting in Orlando, Florida. On the night of the shooting, it was ‘Latin’ night, commencing Latinx Pride. As news of the horrendous event unfolded, it became apparent to me that media and institutions were re-inscribing the very reality of power and dominance that have erased the margins of the margins for centuries. The top was winning; the bottom was left bereft of any power and agency.

Power is all around us, and even in the most safe and sacred of places, we find that we must confront the logic of dominance; for some, however, power and dominance threatens our life to extinction. For 50 folks, most of whom LGBTQ identified Latinxs, power and dominance killed them, before they had a chance to live into new contours of power that is motivated from the agency of the margins of the margins.

This violence perpetuated against those in the Pulse Nightclub was not consensual and should be categorized as a deeply twisted and unproductive sadism that effectively emerges from the logic of dominance. I do not mean to eroticize this particular violence, but it is helpful to acknowledge that nonconsensual violence perpetuated against the margins of the margins is the exact norm that needs to be decolonized, so that the subaltern/bottoms can harness their agency and be resurrected by it.

I take power very seriously – my own power, the power of intimate partners, and the power inherent in the logic of dominance. The reality that we all are just a cog in the machine is one with which marginalized persons can most readily identify. When marginalized folks are able to affectively and effectively disrupt and later dismantle the power that is inherent in the logic of dominance, then a new contour of eroticism is able to materialize. I consider this part of the process of decolonizing erotics.

Taking power seriously not only establishes power as a thing in itself, a material reality that is discursively constructed, but also a feature that is wielded by some against others. Because marginalized folks have never consented to being dominated by the multiple systems of oppression, including relational systems, that are present in the world, there is significant need to not only locate marginalized bodies, especially those who are the most marginalized, those being queer bodies of colour, as sources of power, but to also decolonize our very notion of power. As a first step in this article, I offer my own attempt at decolonizing power by using kink/BDSM as a mode of awareness in the decolonial process and strategically locate ‘power’ as a particular birthing that stems from the margins of the margins, or bottom space.¹ This space/place of power, though, is always in relationship with the Centre or top space. To think about the relationality of power and dominance together with submission is important. I am not framing power and dominance as a thing in itself that is over against submission. The two are intimately entangled as a thing that is

1. Here I am privileging a risk-aware consensual kink where all parties involved are aware of the risk in giving and receiving stimulation and sensation.

becoming. One's orientation to power and dominance also includes an awareness to submission and a devotion to the power that is shared between those who are engaged.²

As a second move that is entirely constructive, I offer a semi-autobiographical sustained reflection on the productive frame of a queer D/S engagement that has and continues to produce an entanglement of divine symbiosis calling forth the power and agency of bottom space in decolonial ways. I offer a semi-autobiographical narrative that is performative in nature. The entanglement of such a productive power engagement has initiated a queer sexual theology where queerness enfleshes both an eschatological vision for moving beyond the 'here' and 'now', and a new queer potentiality of futures becoming.³ I note the eschatological vision, so that there is a normative horizon of justice in place in this frame of queer and kink, but one that might not necessarily be strategically teleological. However, while eschatology embodies what I would reference as potential, it is important to also raise up the complexities of teleology. Queerness is more than the here and now, as Muñoz argues; it is in some senses, an ontology of becoming, a potentiality of a future utopia; it is directed to(wards) an end, but at root is non-teleological, in my assessment. Because queer transcends and transgresses the here and now, it is important to acknowledge the capacity of potential and always destabilize the teleology of normative eschatological visions.⁴

-
2. Here I talk about devotion to power as a contour of intimacy that is generated and exchanged by those who are negotiating the entanglement of dominance and submission. I find it important to talk about the role of intimacy relative to the ways in which power is expressed, in order for a queer sex practice to emerge. Because, the role of power might be enacted in the realm of excess, which is where I think queerness is located. And, so, intimacy is not something that is necessarily central to sex practice, but perhaps becomes a feature of the entanglement of dominance and submission, which might look very different than intimacy in (hetero) normative engagements.
 3. The notion of time and temporality has been an ongoing conversation between myself and Revd. Chris Davies for the last five months. At her pushing me to rethink time outside of a dominant Western framework, I have come to affirm her own queer eschatological vision as something that is rooted in the notion of God. And, because I frame the notion of God as that which is always becoming, or the force of a vital impulse, our conversations negotiating the teleology and non-teleology of time and God has been productive. For now, I've landed on queerness having an eschatological vision – it is a becoming, which is full of potential that is beyond the 'here' and 'now,' as Muñoz says. This is a direct influence of Chris's own constructive ideas concerning her own development of queer theology that is deeply entrenched in both a theology of incarnation and radical immanence. I credit Chris with this strategic influence that is shaping and re-shaping my own theological orientation relative to time and queerness, that implicates a futures becoming in an anti-capitalist manner. In this sense, then, I do think that queerness and a queer sexual theology framed by an eschatological vision can point toward a normative horizon of justice-making. I think this is central to the decolonial impulse I have with regard to kink.
 4. Here I am thinking of the following quote from *Cruising Utopia*: 'Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world... This [queer] "we" does not speak to a merely identitarian logic but instead a logic of futurity. The "we" speaks to a "we" that is "not yet conscious...[a] future society that is being invoked and addressed at the same moment"', José Esteban Muñoz. In: Panotto N (ed.) (2016) *Indecent Theologians: Marcella Althaus-Reid and the Next Generation of Postcolonial Activists*. Available at borderlesspress.com

Decolonizing Power from the Bottom Up⁵

Power is often located in the nexus of what is often called the ‘Centre,’ a particular matrix of flows of power that produce continuous flows of desire, both within the Centre and for the Centre to profit.⁶ I argue that sadism emerges from the power that is controlled by the Centre, and the rupture of sadist power is not connected to the desire from the masochist; it is a power that materializes as oppression, a particular deviance that is not productive. Another way of declaring this feature of power is to suggest that institutions are inherently sadistic, and this sadism is rooted in their self-interested narcissism. The margins, as ones who are in direct relationship with the Centre (and sometimes not by choice), then, are recipients of the pain that is inflicted upon them, whereby masochism is the only response to the sadism of institutions.⁷ In many respects, this form of S/M play perpetuates the non-consensual reality of power and dominance over against marginalized bodies.

What I am attempting is a radical unhinging from a ‘power over’ dominance that stems from the logic of dominance and instead an intentional move to decolonize power and invite a new structure and frame of power that stems from the margins of the margins; it is the intentional constructive move in producing a power bottom.⁸ I have identified this new structure and frame of power as a ‘power with’ and this power with is initiated from the epistemological ruptures that the margins of the margins en flesh. The notion of a ‘power with’ is also connected to ontology as I see this expression of power as an orientation in addition to the production of knowledge that stems from bodies that results in a becoming-being.⁹ On some level, epistemological ruptures become analogous to the preferential option that is a central organizing feature of Latin American Liberation Theology.¹⁰ And, epistemological ruptures become part of a new ontological framework of becoming that inherently addresses the power of knowledge that resides in marginalized bodies.

When there is intentional effort to subvert the power of sadists (institutions) by those who embody power on the margins of the margins, steps of decolonizing power, pain and pleasure begin to take shape. This decolonial move is a productive ripple in the

5. The language of top and bottom, while hierarchical, provides a helpful frame of relationality in kink/BDSM. Until a more creative frame emerges within the queer community, I will utilize these two words to not only help illustrate the role of the subaltern but also to show the productive nature of a bottoming becoming.
6. I borrow the language of ‘flows’ from Deleuze and Anzaldúa. They both talk about energy flows and lines of flight. I think this is a helpful way of thinking about desire and power.
7. I have written about this elsewhere where border crossers engage in a type of non-consensual masochism by Sadist Babylon. It is important to note that marginalized folks are always vulnerable to the systems of oppression that deflect sadist power onto them.
8. Putting these two terms together helps reshape bottom space as rooted in the productive capacity of a becoming power.
9. Here ‘becoming-being’ references Gloria Anzaldúa’s work on her own onto-epistemology found in ‘El Mundo Zurdo’. Moraga C, Anzaldúa G (eds) *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. New York: Kitchen Table Press.
10. Decolonizing power as something that becomes a power within the margins of the margins, instead of being wielded over against the margins of the margins, completely unhinges traditional and normative power paradigms. It is at this moment where bottom space comes to the edge of becoming.

emergence of a queer sexual theology, and we must be attentive to the role of power in both sadists and masochists, and the agency of the power bottom to disrupt (in productive ways) that expression of power that stems from the sadist's twisted mind. I argue that this move is decolonizing erotics.

The act of decolonizing erotics is one such strategy at subverting normative frameworks that shape and shift what is erotic.¹¹ In doing this work, we not only disrupt the power of the Centre (who is both a Top and sadist), but we invite the power and agency of the Bottom, who is simultaneously a masochist. Utilizing a productive framework of topping and bottoming, in conversation with Marcella Althaus-Reid's theology of sex and perversion, I argue that a decolonial erotics ruptures existing sexual theologies, which have primarily reinforced the (hetero)norm. This 'emergence' is the productive flow of becoming whose point of departure is (from) the margins of the margins, and such productive flows of becoming commence from the power and agency of the subaltern, or the masochistic bottom.¹²

Decolonizing Erotics from the Bottom Up

Power, while both a discursive and material reality, has become a technology of dominance and normalization with regard to sex and sexualities that affectively stabilizes the practices of sex. The Gay Liberation Movement sought to unhinge from normative politics of sex, but so much of gay liberation was and is rooted in the culture of whiteness; queer sex needs a dose of race and class to help it achieve the desired queerness that is inherent in the possibility of queer sex. The machine of power controls in absolute ways, and there is a total power exchange that is non-consensual for those on the margins of the margins and the awareness of risk in the non-consent is bypassed by the power that is levelled against the margins of the margins. Because consent is such an important feature when addressing power, it might be important to acknowledge that the margins of the margins have never consented to being on the edge of death, or the edge of any reality.¹³

Neoliberal capitalism, imperialism, and the logic of dominance have all been entangled to create the perfect conditions to keep the margins of the margins on the edge of destruction, otherwise known as their own extinction. Power as a technology of dominance needs to be decolonized, so that the Centre is destabilized in its sadism and the imposed masochism onto the margins of the margins actually are able to harness their own imagination and agency and consent to power. Yet, when the margins of the margins affectively and effectively harness their agency and imagination, eroticism and erotic

-
11. In response, while I privilege the materiality of the body in radical ways, when I think about eroticism, I am creatively imagining and intentionally unhinging eroticism from genitalia. I think it is important in kink frameworks to think broadly about eroticism and the ways in which our imaginations harness new contours of eroticism.
 12. I am riding together both masochism and bottom space by restructuring bottom space as the one with power. And so, the power bottom chooses to engage in pain play that then motivates their agency into new contours of eroticism.
 13. Here, edge play can be exhilarating, but only when there is enthusiastic consent. And, the margins of the margins participate in non-consensual edge play, which re-inscribes the logic of dominance and technologies of normalization.

play is motivated from the bottom up to(wards) the top. This is an important moment in the consensual play of power exchange.

In the face of ongoing dominance that has materialized through and by imperialism and the destruction of capitalism, the margins of the margins, otherwise identified as bottoms, are motivated by their epistemological ruptures relative to power and begin to enmesh their own power that is in direct response to the power that has not only marginalized them into extinction but oppressed them into a non-consensual exchange of power and dominance.

In an effort to privilege decolonial theory in the construction of a queer sexual theology, this article begins with the theoretically rich work of Spivak's 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' and Althaus-Reid's attempt to pervert theology.¹⁴ Spivak's rhetorical question 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' is more than a rhetorical strategy. This question amplifies the notions of power and agency that is inherent in bottom space, which is also contoured by masochism and productive erotic pain. We have just not been too savvy in recognizing the power of bottom space in our theologies, nor in our practices. This article is an intentional effort to not only expose the limit of Althaus-Reid's work but also push interpretations of her work into a more radically aware decolonized bottom space, where power and agency are manifest with the margins of the margins. This is also an attempt to explicitly name the reality of the contours of desired pain from the sadist (institutions), and the reception of pain from masochists (margins). While this might seem like a hard binary of institutions (centre) and others (margins), the reality is that this functions more like a nexus of becoming and queer relationality between sadists and masochists (tops and bottoms).¹⁵ Inherent in this construction of the nexus of power and agency is the radical disruption of the hard and fast binary.¹⁶ What emerges is the kaleidoscope of becoming that is motivated by the power and agency of the masochistic bottom. Noting this kaleidoscope of becoming initiates a new contour of decolonizing erotics that is committed to the productive potential of a becoming power that is found within the shared power exchange between tops and bottoms.

In order to sufficiently theorize masochistic bottom space as a decolonial erotics, I must use the sharpened tools of assemblage thinking that supports the critique of the matrix of oppressions and analyses these intersections for the productive possibility of allowing power to have its rightful potential. By acknowledging the intersections of race, class, gender, sex, and sexuality, we are able to destabilize bottom space as space that

14. I think the mode of perversion is actually a helpful one, but I am unsure if Althaus-Reid effectively perverts theology. She certainly sexualizes theology, but theology isn't pushed to the edge in the play of perversion. This is an obvious gap in Althaus-Reid's theology, how ever indecent she tries to write it. I think doing theology from the place of the power bottom is one such way to pervert the under-sexed theologies that might help move the poverty of sexuality to the place of abundance and excess of queerness.

15. I think important here is to note that none of us is ever free from the institution or the margins. Economically speaking, many of us are a paycheck away from destruction and quite possibly extinction. Destabilizing the relationality between Centre and Margin might be an effective way to reorient the unproductive capacity of power and dominance into a productive expression of power that is not rooted in technologies of normalization and/or surveillance.

16. The binary exist in language, only, I argue.

historically has been stabilized as passive and instead re-energize bottom space with the inherent power that is rooted in the margins of the margins, and infused bottom space with the productive potential to receive pain in erotic ways. I find this decolonizing reality part of the liberation framework for all bodies engaging in systems of power play and sex.

Decolonizing Erotics by Decolonizing Liberation

Liberation Theology and the 'option for the poor' has sufficiently analysed class and the overwhelming poverty that has affected millions. Poverty can be read as a 'bottom' space, whereas privilege and richness can be read as 'top' space. As a particular bottom space, the poor get short-changed and they are the recipients of the pain of poverty, which commences from an uninvited ask and is perpetuated by the dynamics of the global neoliberal capitalist market. The poverty of sexuality in Latin American liberation theology, as Althaus-Reid rightly points out, uncovers the logic of dominance at play in the (hetero) norms of Liberation Theology. And yet, uncovering the poverty of sexuality does not privilege the margins of the margins, understood in this article as bottom space, as a first order step. What helps privilege the margins of the margins are the ethics of perversion in our theological imagination. Perversion is productive and an essential contour to the overwhelming liberative norms that a queer sexual theology is attempting to illustrate. Noting the importance of perversion in the work of decolonizing bottom space, and I can point to my own work on the ethics of perversion that was just recently published, I harness a theological imagination that initiates the excess of what is.¹⁷ While on the surface this appears to be an ontological statement, it is more complex than merely a question or statement of being, and certainly not an attempt to stabilize being as the dominant ontology. Initiating the excess of 'what is' further entangles the production of knowledge and action, together, with the question of ontology, which is framed by becoming.

By starting with a theological imagination of excess, queerness is prioritized as an essence without identity, as David Halperin suggests. Instead of prioritizing the (hetero) norm that is found throughout institutionalized religion and academic/orthodox theology, I turn to BDSM and kink as the particular excess that allows for an ethics of perversion, that particular entanglement of ontology, epistemology, and ethics, to reorient the process of theological imagination.¹⁸ Doing this helps destabilize bottom space as the productive flow of becoming that is inherently a powerful receptor of pain.

While Deleuze and Guattari theorized productive flows as breaks and links, relative to the fits and starts in capitalism, I follow their lead, but reorient productive flows with the margins of the margins through sex and power. What this does is recalibrate power as stemming from the margins of the margins, from bottom space, and displace the overwhelming reality of neoliberalism and the hyper-individualism that normalizes both sex and theology. Reorienting power as that which stems from the margins of the margins, or

17. See my article, Pressing On in Panotto N (ed.) *Indecent Theologians: Marcella Althaus-Reid and the Next Generation of Postcolonial Activists*. Available at borderlesspress.com

18. Excess in this sentence refers to queerness as excess, and that which is beyond what is contained by the (hetero)norm.

bottom space, also demands a particular submission by those who occupy top space.¹⁹ By looking to the margins of the margins as the particular standpoint of productive power flows and utilizing an ethics of perversion through BDSM and kink, we not only decolonize the practice, but we also decolonize erotics. Let me explain.

When we think about margin and centre, we also need to think about the margins beyond margins, or the margins of the margins, as expressed by Althaus-Reid. Or, in the language of Heidegger, margining margins. This discursive phrase is helpful in illustrating the productiveness of the margins and the manner in which the margins display potentiality to decolonize a global reality of multi-system oppressions through their own agentic force of becoming. The productive potential of the margins of the margins is a space of decolonial power, eroticized by the very bodies that inhabit this space. The power that stems from the margins of the margins becomes power that effectively can function or affectively become a form of topping from bottom space; this is the decolonial move.²⁰ Decolonizing bottom space is a first order step at achieving collective liberation or radical social change. It demands attention to the agency inherent in/at the margins, and when this agency is encouraged to become at its fullest measure, the margins become teeming with life, and life is one such term that needs further exposition.²¹ Power emerges from this space and place and new contours of becoming shape and shift reality; these contours of becoming are rotted in the cup of salvation and we should celebrate the eucharistic potential of such abundant life that emerges from decolonized orientation of margin and centre. This is traditionally called a power bottom in BDSM literature, but I add the theological dimension to such agentic becoming of the power bottom.

Power bottoms are not necessarily overly passive or refuse to engage in the process of power exchange with their top, nor do they give up their own inherent power residing in them. With attention to a passivity that is rooted in agency, or radical passivity as Halberstam has illustrated in *The Queer Art of Failure*, a power bottom becomes devoted to the matrix of power that emerges at the interstices of the agency performed by their top and at the invitation of their top to bottom from the place of power. Halberstam writes: 'In a performance of radical passivity we witness the willingness of the subject to actually come undone, to dramatize unbecoming for the other so that the viewer does not have to witness unbecoming as a function of her own body'. Likewise, a power bottom's

19. To argue that tops submit to bottoms is a twist on normative D/S engagements. Also, in kink literature, dominant and submissive is often written with a capital D and a lower case s. In my formulation, I utilize D/S to show the mutual exchange of power and the mutual submission that is at play. Sometimes the submission from the D is to the race of the S, or other forms of submission. Decolonizing bottom space requires a mutual exchange of submission throughout the engagement; this contributes to the productive becoming of a power bottom that is rooted in decolonized power.

20. This phrase 'topping from bottom space' is the intentional recognition and acknowledgement that bottoms en flesh a significant source of power. I much prefer to talk about power bottoming, instead of topping from the bottom.

21. Here life is something that is rooted in a frame of abundance, not scarcity. The creative becoming of a power bottom in relationship with a strong top helps support the new creative dimensions of the force of life, illustrated by Spinoza's *conatus*, Nietzsche's will, and Deleuze's becoming.

attention to radical passivity is a particular failure at being the margins of the margins. The failure, however, is productive in that it decolonizes marginalized space. I use failure in a positive sense. Failing as productive helps produce new contours of power that bottom space can access in relationship with their top.

The Production of a Power Bottom

The thought that power can be productive is one such idea that I am invested in cultivating, especially with regard to D/S engagements. What contours of power emerge when a submissive enfleshes a mode of dominance? How does their own dominance help to not only destabilize the traditional orientation of a dominant as the only one in power but also contribute to the important bridging work when acknowledging the constructions of race are a part of the equation?

The production of a power bottom commences when the bottom's agency is enlivened by the the dominance of power that becomes an exchange rooted in mutuality, when the bottom embraces their power inherent in their positionality as one at the margins of the margins. When the bottom acknowledges that the margins of the margins are the places where they are able to harness their own power, they meet the power of the dominant, not in oppositional ways, but in productive ways. In this sense, the power exchange becomes a mutual sharing of power and a process of cultivating a productive power exchange that results in power being with both bottom and top. Cultivating this type of power exchange is part of the process of decolonizing erotics. I offer the following performative writing as an example of such power exchange as it shapes the epistemological and ontological frameworks relative to power and erotics, which also incites a new feature of ethics in the development of a queer sexual theology.

Performative writing carries with it both an analysis of culture and energy to perform what is at hand. Most often interpreted through the lens of critical theory, performative writing has the great capacity to raise salient points that would otherwise be eclipsed by a theory-only orientation. As a particular expression of postmodern writing, queer performative writing that has materialized through erotic writing and other venues like slam poetry, helps mobilize both a particular content of ideas and the recognition of the affect that enfleshes the power to motivate radical social change. In that vein, I offer the following as a critical device in recognizing the role of power in bottoming and the ways in which race and class impact bottom space and call for the particularized agency that serves as an epistemological rupture for the bottom that effectively motivates a queer relationality where the intersections of race, class, sex, gender, ability all converge in a mutual exchange of power for both the D and the S.

I'll never bottom for a white woman. That's the message I wanted to give her when we hooked up in a hotel during a cold Midwest winter. Instead, I told her, "I thought I was done with white women," at her insistence in knowing what I was thinking. We had a brief exchange in the hotel hallway en route to the elevator to her room about power exchange. I was consenting to exchanging power; but did that mean I was about to bottom for a white woman? Did she know what she was asking? Was her awareness oriented outside of her own power and in relation to the other body she was engaging? Her whiteness and her privilege as a femme of center top made the assumption that a brown body was going to bottom for her that night.

She doesn't kiss before she fucks. I know this now, and I remind her that I kissed her before we fucked that night. In fact, she asked if she could kiss me as she sat atop me and I told her "no." Was I illustrating the power that I enmesh? Was I showing her how this was done? I later moved in to kiss her, and she was beneath me, in that particular moment. Was that a move of power becoming decolonized? Sure, I took her commands and ran them thru the sieve of my own enmeshment of power. I just don't let anyone dominate me, nor am I going to submit without a clear picture of what it means to top a brown body.

I'll never bottom for a white woman. Looking back, I wondered if she had any idea of the power I embody or any idea of the imagination about power exchange that I enmesh? Does she now? I doubt it. I don't think she did, and I think I continue to surprise her when we meet up for an exchange of power. When she shoves my head into her cunt, I resist, not on the grounds of not wanting her cunt, but on the grounds of reminding her that, I, too, bring a substantive orientation to power, though decolonized. And, yet, I follow her command when she tells me to turn over on my back and then proceeds to sit on my face.

I'll never bottom for a white woman, until I met this one. I know I destabilized the power exchange when I told her I thought I was done with white women, all the while she was sitting atop me in the hotel room late that winter's night in the midwest. Is that moment a productive metaphor for our power exchange? It might be, and so, in the heat of the summer, I still wonder if she realizes the power that I enmesh?

It happened, again, when we met in Atlanta during the fresh spring months. With her femme cock ready to penetrate me, she slapped my leg. I retorted: "do you know what you are doing?" She stopped, paralyzed in her own fear that she had crossed a line. It was in this moment that my power as a bottom destabilized her white Toppo power, and also called in the dynamics of race and gender. I replied to her paranoia that all was well, but she should always be prepared for brown agency to be a part of our exchange.

I'll never bottom for a white woman, until this one stumbled upon me in a midwest bar. Not once has she erased me in my racialized being, that of a non-binary TransQueer Latinx being hyper-invisible in relationship with whites. Not once has she used her racialized (white) power to colonize my body. She acknowledges my brown agency in productive ways and divests of her own power in exchange for my power.

I'll never bottom for a white woman, unless she helps me decolonize bottom space. That's our agreement – to decolonize bottom space, so that a productive queerness is able to materialize.

I've never been waiting for white power, but I've been waiting for her.

I'll never bottom for a white woman, unless she is in complete submission to race, and she is.

Power bottoming is an orientation to the space of the margins of the margins and an attunement to one's own practice of harnessing power that has been marginalized by systems of oppression. By engaging in a D/S engagement where the S leans into a power bottoming orientation, the engagement itself has the capacity to destabilize traditional power arrangements and lean into the potential of the power bottom to harness their

imagination and internal power meter to help shape and shift new strategies of dominance and submission. When dominance and submission is also framed by decolonized sadism and masochism, we begin to see new contours of kink that help frame a queer sexual theology. I believe power bottoming is one such way to help reframe kink in decolonial ways that privileges the agency of the bottom and requires submission from that one who is heralded as dominant.

Conclusion

Sexualizing theology in perverse ways helps de-clinicalize sex and eroticism. Althaus-Reid began this work by using a liberationist framework and exposing the poverty of sexuality in liberation theology. By addressing power as a productive feature of becoming that is central to dominance and submission, there is an epistemological rupture that must be acknowledged. That rupture is recognizing the submissive as one with inherent power and the move to submission by the dominant. When the Centre and institutions are stabilized as sadists, requiring at times non-consensual reception of submission and pain from bottoms, the masochism that proliferates is an unproductive masochism that results in further colonization of marginalized bodies.

Important here is the very intentional effort to decolonize erotics by privileging the role of the power bottom. Queer sex is one such practice that remains taboo and unacknowledged by those who think about sexual theologies. In thinking about decolonial efforts relative to sex and erotics, we must also think about marginalized bodies and how the logic of dominance, often expressed by the sadist institution/the Centre, affects these bodies. When the imperial framework of traditional D/s is decolonized and the s is encouraged to become S, the D, also always becoming with the S, submits to those pieces of the S that are most vulnerable to marginalization. Seen most clearly in the möbius strip that topographically is always single-sided and always doubling, the becoming of the queer D/S engagement, framed by a queerness that supports an eschatological vision, initiates new contours of justice-making in the positivity of a queer relationality that becomes part of the queer revolution that is rooted in the potential of becoming.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.