

Transing the Modern World

- Simran Hisaria

Introduction –

The prefix ‘trans’ cannot solely be attached to gender or sexuality, as the word ‘Trans’ itself is deemed to be non-conformist in nature by those who use it, and hence in this context, ‘Transing’ the modern world can be looked upon as having an intersectional understanding of the modern world and its societies, because an ‘intersectional analysis’ by the very outset cannot have a rigid structure nor can it be based upon a fundamental ideological understanding of a certain phenomenon in society nor society as a whole. We must ‘Trans’ the modern world to achieve the third person perspective on the politics of power that engulf societies to better gauge the situation at hand rather than have a passionate but ultimately narrow view on the State and the systems of oppression it employs to oppress the populous. The oppressed populous in turn utilizes tools to emancipate itself – which can range from the use of erotica to challenge patriarchy’s libido to civil movements that confront the State itself.

Thesis Statement –

The purpose of this essay will be to illustrate that the binary rigidity that societies have established as the norm (such as in race or in gender) are social constructions that are colonial imports. These colonial imports have established a hegemon on the structuring of society along gender and racial lines. The decolonization (or elimination) of social constructs is what constitutes as ‘transing’ the modern world.

This is not to say that ‘Transing’ will mean to have a cold analytic outlook of State and Society – the same way society and state have treated the non-Binary when it comes to gender, as medical mishaps or ‘objects’ that are an occasional occurrence in Binary society. When we ‘Trans’ something, that something must be understood as a

product of its socio-political environment and not simply as a phenomenon in itself. For the United States, the colonial import of Christianity from Europe defined its societies and their beliefs. The beliefs of conservative religious orders like any other conservative, orthodox religious order is built upon the establishment of its own moral and philosophical systems which can be distinct from one and other, however, amongst all major world religions, patriarchal oppression and xenophobia is common. In reaction to democracy, it is the conservative Christian vote that propels anti-abortion laws. Alicia Garza summaries this in “The Purpose of Power” – “The conservative consensus is driven by the values of conservative Christianity and deadly economic policy, and it denies the majority access to human rights”. (Page 135 Alicia Graza – Purpose of power)

On Race –

A good example of the orthodox, one-dimensional view that is easy to use and easy to propagate is the white conservative understanding of the Black Lives Matter movement that had sparked back in July 2020, at the death of George Floyd in police custody. The conservative argument is that the African-American community stands in solidarity (stupidly) with criminals and lowlifes because the Afro-Americans ‘love’ being the ‘imagined’ victim of racial violence even when an individual, detached from the community is being attacked, and for just reasons.

One can see that the conservative view obviously is one-dimensional and hackneyed. If we were to ‘trans’ the Black Lives Matter protests we would have to take into account the gentrification of the African-Americans that still persists in American society and the socio-political implications it has – as a Black individual in America can never be divorced by their imagined ‘origins’, or the ‘hood’ as it is called in popular slang. A Black individual, regardless of gender or class will always be a part of his collective or the ‘ood’, not because they do not wish to distance themselves from it but because their environment will not allow them to distance themselves from it, whether it be physically or psychologically from it or both. It is

perplexing as to how White Conservatives are always dumbstruck and angered at every instance of African-American solidarity because Racial America had engineered its societies to be divided among racial lines, the remnants of which haunt Black Americans to this day. This visible remnant seems to be the elephant in the room that Conservative politicians and politics choose to ignore.

It is this willful ignorance to the great 'other' that leads to sustained anger at the State, by Black Americans and Trans-Americans. The State is oppressive not only in the sense in that it utilizes bureaucracy and police to maintain the status quo but also in the sense that the State protects the structures of oppression present in society, such as Patriarchy to keep both the Binary and the Non-Binary in line, but with a more 'formalized legal system' to institute systemic differentiation – the same can be equated with systemic racism prevalent in the United States.

Emphasis on the theory being used –

The erasure of rigid differentiation of individuals in society along the lines of gender and race is an effort in the decolonization of society from the dominant ideology of 'recognising and reconciling the differences amongst individuals in society' is not enough. 'Transing' the modern world seeks the erasure of the ideology of differentiation as it has aided the hierarchical structures of oppression to operate in a bid to protect the status quo and the social institutions they employ to suppress the downtrodden, in a both Marxist and Feminist understanding.

On Patriarchy and the Second Sex –

Patriarchy, one of the foremost social institutions involved in the oppression of 'the second sex' and the non-binary derives its power from depriving women of their freedom from expressing their own desires and having the patriarch decide those desires for the women. Amongst the multiplicity of aims Patriarchy seeks to achieve and uphold, an important aim amongst them is the aim of depriving women of sexual power and render the female completely subservient

to the patriarch. The female in patriarchy is recognised as an object of sexual desire – and it is this desire that the patriarch expresses towards the female that is dangerous to the patriarch as the woman possesses something that man cannot intrinsically have – hence the need for a system of oppression of the woman by the man, in both the household.

Hence, the biological orientation of men towards women leaves them in a state of bargain. While there seems to be an understanding of this in the general populous, the understanding of this innate biological orientation and the systems of oppression it spawns to meet it have resulted in a perverted exhibition and commodification of women in the form of pornography.

Audre Lorde and Erotica –

There is nothing passionate nor empowering in pornography, as it is produced with the aim of it being consumed as a commodity. If one was to use the biological hold women have over men then one should look towards the use of the erotic in Audre Lorde's works. She is able to spark the passion and desire in ways which is free of the perverted commodification of erotica that is pornography – but she doesn't pull any punches when into the depiction of her erotica.

The usage of erotica here is significant as it addresses the heteronormative pull and fascination men have over women, which, through the institution of patriarchy, men are able to act upon.

Perhaps it is this heteronormativity that leaves the transgenders in a position of harassment and violence, because of the alienation they face from the biological sex-drive that men and women have conditioned themselves to. Heterosexuality, not just as a self-discovered sexual preference but rather a norm is one of the primary reasons of society's vehement hostility towards the non-binary, as they are perceived to be useless to the sexual satisfaction for him or her.

Hence, 'Transing' homosexuality will reveal that sexuality is also enforced by State and society. No individual would like to be treated as a pariah and hence there are several individuals who would ideally identify as non-Binary but conform to the Binary in fear of being cast out.

While the modern world has emerged with being more interested in capital over anything else, the old prejudices and colonial impositions have not been wiped away but have been integrated into the societal structure that we inhabit. Hence, the Non-Binary and the Minorities have been denied access or exposure to the means required to generate a substantial amount of capital so that they too can acquire a stake in national wealth.

Student activism, the conservative reaction and conclusion –

While activism, protests and movements for the liberation of the non-binary and the minorities from systemic repression have been going on for decades now, we have only scratched the surface. In response to the formal changes and legislations brought about by such activism have been few and far between, it has provoked a strong conservative response that has begun to villainize entire communities as harbingers of the biblical Armageddon.

This should not impede us in our efforts to bring systemic or ideological change to our societies, because the rigid differentiation of the 'old world' will not go away without a fight. Hence, we must continue to question, organize and agitate. Hence, we "Trans" the Modern World – in an effort to decolonize ourselves from the many variants of oppression. To end with a quote from "The Purpose of Power" by Alicia Garza – "Our movements must reflect the best of who we are and who we can be". (Page 135 Alicia Graza – Purpose of power)

Citations

Audre Lorde uses of the erotic

Adrienne Rich Compulsory Heterosexuality and lesbian existence

TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly, Volume 1, Numbers 1–2.

Alicia Graza – Purpose of power