“Queerer Than Queer: Anti-Ancestry, Disavowal, and the Emirati Post-Oil Generation”

In November 2015, I gave a lecture at Yale University that focused on the psychiatric rehabilitative management and normative regulation of sexuality in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Before I presented my work and while I was introduced, it was underlined by a professor that I ought to be acknowledged for the brave and courageous research that I have been conducting in the field of sexuality studies and that, in turn, I was regarded in the region of the Arab Gulf as embodying a brave lesbian iconicity among queer women in the region. This statement was made in connection with my research on queer subjectivities in the Gulf. In private, after I had presented my lecture, the professor asked me whether I was in fact a lesbian. She assumed that I was, owing to my academic investment in the field of queer and sexuality studies and how it relates to the UAE. While this statement is problematic in so far as it opens up the limits of identitarian claims, ironically her question to me falls within a tradition of identitarian framing and field-naming strategies at institutions of higher education. I am not the first to experience identitarian framing such as this, nor am I the first to document these experiences. In her discussion on identitarian critique, Robyn Wiegman discusses the responses that both Judith Butler and Eve Sedgwick gave when they were similarly profiled at Yale (2012a, 156–
While the understanding of my lesbian iconicity and reception at Yale is endemic of minoritarian essentialism, universalizing views of homosexuality were also cast during my fieldwork in the UAE. During interview sessions I conducted with the Dubai Police, I was asked whether I advocate gay rights and demand the allowance of gay marriage in the UAE. Gay rights are emblematic of Western freedom, and the notion of gay rights stands as a resource for imperialist projects (Puar 2008). Thus, the reception of my work is here seen as that which is aligned with the West, LGBTQ activism, and universal human rights discourses. In other words, the reception of my work oscillates between two discursive structures; that expressed at Yale of identitarian and minoritizing frameworks alongside that expressed in the UAE of Western liberal paradigms and anti-homophobic systems. This reception, therefore, is situated at the intersection of these discourses, such that they are more about pro- and anti-homophobic rhetoric than about identity categories (Wiegman 2012b). Therefore, I situate my scholarship and its reception both within Anglo-American academia and with reference to the UAE and how they both relate to the discursive strategies around identitarianism. There is something to be said about the extent to which specific geopolitical authorial subjectivities become aligned with their objects of study. In other words, the Anglo-American reception of my work on queers in the UAE is embraced as brave and courageous, thereby engendering a certain heroics, not just in terms of the discourses of sexual politics but also with reference to a politics that operates at the intersection of race, class, and privilege.

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1 In “Imitation and Gender Insubordination,” in which Butler extended her critique of identity as a regulatory regime of gender and sexual identity, she declared her resistance to going to Yale “to be a lesbian” (Butler 1996, 375).
In this article, I advocate a queer politics that operates outside the scribes of identitarian claims and critique. “Queerer Than Queer” is indebted to Sedgwick’s reparative essay “Queerer than Fiction,” where she proposes that the term queer be used in the first person (Sedgwick 1996). Queer thus becomes a site apart from identitarian frameworks found in my own experience of framing and field-naming strategies within Anglo-American academic contexts; as well as the association of my work with queer liberalism in the UAE. Queer is also a site of resistance outside frameworks of post-oil networks of succession. I argue that the citizen-state relationship is not based on a straightforward economic exchange as has previously been established in literature on the rentier state, but instead built on an economy of debt, inheritance and narratives of reproduction and regeneration. Thus, I argue that the rentier paradigm fails to take into account the way in which the relationship between the citizen and the state extends beyond the economic, namely the way in which the structures of privilege and precarity give rise to the production of the indebted subject. In particular, the post-oil generation in the UAE is situated in a relationship of indebtedness and inheritance to the post-oil welfare state. It has borne witness to a landscape of excess, expatriate population growth, and values that may be in conflict with those upheld by indigenous groups, all of which are directly tied to the two major oil booms in this region from 1973 to 1982 and from 2003 to 2007. Throughout this article, I therefore advocate a politics that operates against the machinations of oil wealth and ancestry in the UAE. I propose the idea of anti-generation as a political metaphor for transgression in this geopolitical context, and I further establish an orientation toward queer where deviation does not necessarily

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2 In her analysis of reading practices, Sedgwick raises Melanie Klein’s use of love as a reparative process, remarking that the identification with certain cultural objects is transformative and also essential to queer intertextuality. Using the term queer in the first person stems from love as a positionality occupied by those who repair culture in this way.
refer to queer in line with hetero/homosexual narratives, but rather to a deviation that operates outside the scribes of Emirati post-oil networks and their biopolitical discourses of reproduction and regeneration.

**The Post-Oil Generation**

Until recently, I have had a distant relationship to my field of study and to my own biographic intervention, as I regard myself as invested in academic rigor as opposed to descriptive narratives. My reception at Yale and the problematics I continue to face in the UAE in so far as my situatedness is concerned have forced me to further consider a more immersive relationship to both the UAE and the post-oil generation.

During the course of the last ten years, I have attempted to conceptualize a locale that I come from and that I have sought to theorize. Within a terrain of depletion lies what I delineate as the “post-oil generation:” those who are directly subjected to a national collective imaginary regarding the state’s attempts to construct and preserve a national ethnic collectivity and its biopolitical regeneration of a dying population. I use the term “post-oil” to describe the way in which this generation is implicated within a sociopolitical discursive frame characterized by displacement (Al-Qasimi, 2011). Alongside this lies the state’s own troubled identity in striving toward Western models of modernity, simultaneously rendering this generation the symbolic configuration of the modern nation state and the vessel of national anxiety. Although

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3 My field of study in this context refers specifically to the negotiation of the personal and the geopolitical within ethnographic fieldwork.
the indigenous population as a whole carries the burden of embodying an Emirati identity under threat, with 51% of the Emirati population below the age of 19. It is arguably the youth who are especially vested with the responsibility for defending national cultural identity against the threat of erosion. This generation is distinctive not only in that it is the first to be born after the establishment of the Emirates as a country in 1971, but also in that it saw the two major oil booms of 1973-1982 and 2003-2007, which precipitated expatriate population growth and the popularity of values that may be in conflict with those upheld by indigenous groups. The fact that the extremity of wealth and available capital accelerates the process has further intensified the intergenerational divide. While the generation itself embodies what could be termed the “oil-boom” generation, I argue that the effects of this phenomena be referred to as the “post-oil” generation.

The Arab Gulf monarchies embody a “rentier state,” a term that refers to a country that earns significant portions of its income externally from sales of oil and gas. It is noted that this type of relationship engenders a social contract in which citizens exchange apoliticism for social welfare systems and programs (Losmann 2010, 427; Ennis 2015, 119). In the UAE, the welfare system and its rentier governance provide benefits to those who have citizenship.

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5 In conceptualizing the effects of the generation, I draw on Mannheim’s earlier work, which explains that the tensions of “conceptualizations of knowledge” with regard to social generations to some extent bridge the problem of the ambiguity, concept, and force of generations. For Mannheim, generations are always emergent through notable cultural events and sociohistorical contexts that change social and economic terms, and the new understandings of causality this engenders become embodied in the outlook of a given social generation who become agents of change, giving rise to events which shape future generations (Mannheim 1970, 176; 177; 187; 191).

6 Regardless of how long non-natives have spent in the country, citizenship is granted only to Emirati natives, as Emirati citizenship does not allow for dual citizenship, except in special circumstances where non-citizens have influential connections who can grant them naturalization. See Refworld, n.d.
nationalize the labor force under its Emiratization program, developed in 2005, has incentivized the generation’s membership into the fold of the nation state. The state provides many initiatives, incentives, and forms of support for its citizens in many different fields, such as education, scholarships, and funds for supporting young people and alleviating the costs of marriage and expensive dowries. Additionally, it provides citizens with residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural lands to help find other sources of income. With this responsibility comes both power and subjugation. Those who are in receipt of the state’s privileges are simultaneously subordinated, subject to discourses of cultural preservation that dictate the extent of acceptable transgression, or “deviation.”

**Inheritance and Debt**

The rentier paradigm primarily conceptualizes the economic relationship between the citizen and the state. However, the indebted subject is also produced through conditions of privilege and precarity. It is important in this context to delineate the political framework of monarchical exceptionalism as it relates to the Arab Gulf region. Sean Yom and Gregory Gause describe the region’s various power holders as not only reigning but also ruling; they name cabinets, dictate major domestic and foreign policies, control the state’s coercive apparatus, and allow locales with parliaments and judiciaries only limited authority (Yom and Gause 2012, 76). Regime unity, Yom and Gause explain, is enhanced through the placement of kin in key posts, preventing elite defections and surrounding the ruler with loyal family members (Yom and Gause, 77). Further, Suad Joseph notes that, unlike most

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8. The average national income for citizens is 15,000 dirhams. This figure is derived from the largest category of citizens who are in average careers/positions, whose incomes vary between 10,000 and 20,000 dirhams (ibid.).
Western states, most Arab states’ constitutions identify society’s basic unit as the family rather than the individual. This is relevant in so far as a person’s status as a family member “qualifies them for citizenship,” because these states have built state/citizenry relations based on “kin contracts” (Joseph 2008, 28). This model of state/citizen relationships guides understandings of societal relationships in these countries, as it assumes that all subjects are gendered, aged, and familial subjects who “commit to complementary rights and responsibilities in the kin group a priori to membership in the state” (Joseph, 28).

During my fieldwork, I interviewed Rashid El-Sheikh, a representative from the government of Sharjah, who shared his thoughts on the state’s relationship with its people, which he likened to that of a father and son. He states, “The father always looks for what makes his son happy, and he wishes that his son becomes even better than him in the future. Therefore, giving from the ruler to the people he feels are his children is a limitless giving, and it is a giving that expects nothing in return.” El-Sheikh firmly believes that the state’s leadership prioritizes the happiness of its citizens and does its utmost to maintain their security and stability and to aid in their development. Here, he stresses the importance of education as he emphasizes, “If we don’t invest in education, it will hurt management. They will be a burden on the state. But when you invest in a person who does well and works hard, that improves the image of the state and improves its foundations.” El-Sheikh brings to light the importance of a foundation, built between family and state. He alludes to establishments that were visible before the advent of oil, stating, “Imagine this

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9 Member of the Executive Council of Sharjah and Chairman of the Princely Diwan (Al-Dewan Al-Amiri in Arabic).
10 Rashid El-Sheikh, interview with the author, 2015.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
relationship that has been there for ages, since the very beginning. What is built on correct foundations grows and ripens ... even those children remember the relationship between their parents and the rulers. The process is always a familial process of love and equality that is not one-sided.”

What El-Sheikh introduces as a foundation between state and family, and father and son, also builds into a narrative of familial and state indebtedness.

Ordinary citizens’ indebtedness to the state is exemplified in Lazzarato’s subjective figure, the “Indebted Man,” as every individual must take responsibility for public debt according to neoliberal designations of labor (Lazzarato 2012, 38). Lazzarato argues that obligations come before equalization in debt relations and that the debt economy functions through moral discipline and control in producing subjects. He demonstrates how debt is involved in a process of subjectivation that marks at once both “body” and “spirit”. Lazzarato conceptualizes how economic production involves the creation and control of subjectivity (Lazzarato 2012, 42), arguing that: “It is debt and the creditor-debtor relationship that make up modern-day capitalism’s subjective paradigm, in which ‘labor’ is coupled with ‘work on the self,’ in which economic activity and the ethico-political activity of producing the subject go hand in hand. Debt breeds, subdues, manufactures, adapts, and shapes subjectivity” (Lazzarato, 38–39). Therefore, Lazzarato emphasizes the state-sponsored, structural, and systematic functions of debt as a driving force for neoliberal capital.

In examining the post-oil generation, I situate the procreative brokerages of biopolitics in the UAE within a larger narrative of debt and inheritance, exploring

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13 Ibid.
how nationals are inscribed in the management and optimization of the reproduction of life and capital and also how they are discursively implicated within the project of procreative futurities. Drawing on Foucauldian understandings of biopolitics helps to describe how Emirati nationalist projects operate in relation to notions of regeneration and reproduction. Here, regeneration and reproduction refer to the way in which indigenous nationals are implicated within a framework of sexual and economic productivity driven by the machinations of oil and capital alongside an acute demographic imbalance, motivating the need for indigenous population growth and the development of petrocapitalist networks (Ahmed 2017).

Networks of indebtedness in the UAE are based on the assumption that a child’s line will automatically follow the parent’s line. According to Sara Ahmed, following lines “involves forms of social investment, [and] such investments ‘promise’ return” (Ahmed 2006, 17). If we take for a moment the concept of networks of indebtedness and the “line of the father” (Ahmed 2006) as symbolic of nationalisms and the nation state, the post-oil generation’s relationship to the state can be seen as one of inheritance and debt. Ahmed contends that a gift creates a relationship of indebtedness (Ahmed 2006, 82). In the national project, the child is given the “gift” of being able to follow the parent’s line. Ahmed’s formulation of the “line of the father” can be extended to nationalisms and the nation state, meaning that Emiratis’ relationship to the latter can be seen as one of potential inheritance and debt, where the nation gives the “gift” of indigeneity and expects economic and reproductive return. Ahmed avers, “The lines of discipline are certainly a form of inheritance ... the line begins with the father and is followed by those who ‘can’ take his place” (Ahmed 2006, 22). However, the interiority of genealogical lines creates a subject of debt beyond the economic. Deriving from Ahmed’s argument, incurring a social debt
requires one to imagine futurity in terms of reaching certain points along a life course. Such points accumulate, creating the impression of a straight line. To follow such a line might be a way to become straight, by not deviating at any point (Ahmed 2006, 16). Ahmed’s theory applies to my work on the UAE in the expectation that a child’s line should follow the parent’s line and further, in the way that things that fall away from this straight line are forced back onto it (Ahmed 2006, 90).

I resituate the rentier paradigm from a brokerage between the state and the people to the realm of affect and subjectivity. The post-oil welfare UAE that El-Sheikh describes with his paternal metaphor evokes this idea of the state as a straightening device. Ahmed introduces the concept of a straight line when she talks about heteronormativity isolating queer members of society. She refers to powers that define societal norms as straightening devices that aid in “straightening” slants or bends. She further discusses “breaking points” in the line (Ahmed 2006, 90). In the UAE, active female heterosexuality, homosexuality, transgender practice, and marriage outside ethnic kinship structures fall under the rubric of these breaking points. In an article entitled “The Brokerage of Lineage and Survival in the UAE,” I examine the procreative futurity of the UAE, which is part of its nationalist biopolitical project, where the state is bent on reproductive futurity in the name of lineage and reproduction due to the threat of demographic imbalance. In addition, I argue that rehabilitation and psychiatric intervention act as straightening devices, folding deviant bodies into the nation state.

I also consider how the flows and cutting or breaking points of lines and networks allow for an intervention beyond hetero- and homo-normative dyads that utilize the notion that networks are measurable by indebtedness to each other “through the flow

14 Forthcoming, 2019.
of objects, human and non-human" (Strathern 1996, 529). In her 1996 article, Strathern considers some of the uses to which the concepts of “hybrids” and “networks” are being put and argues that, despite the “auto-limitlessness” of networks, attention needs to be placed at points where networks are cut to determine definite and specific forms. As an intervention on the indebtedness between the state and the post-oil generation, and the exchange and translation implicated therein, Strathern notes, “These include those who give or receive wealth, or the people they stand for” (Strathern 1996, 529). The contingency of relational networks, along with the enactment of “hybridity” or the evocation of the hybrid state, is similarly implicated by Strathern’s consideration of networks and their boundaries (Strathern 1996). Through an exploration of networks as socially expanded hybrids (Strathern 1996, 523), her intervention and approach focus on how the body contains and channels the ways relations are created, while certain flows are sustained and stopped, pointing out how old relations are cancelled before new ones are produced. Strathern’s work draws parallels between the moment of interpretive pause, or the “cutting” Derrida refers to in relation to the gift or the secret (Derrida 1992), and the way one phenomenon stops the flow of others and, thus, how networks operate (Strathern 1996, 522). Methodologically, this anthropological intervention draws attention to the way fertility feedback systems mean sex/gender is situated in wider networks and flows that entail transaction and debt.

**Oil and Animacy**

In my analysis of biopolitical logics and the management of life and death in the Emirati post-oil context, I consider not only the role of bodily assemblages but also the relationship between human and inhuman things, namely the role of oil itself, in the process of transgression. Mel Chen seeks to trouble the binary of life and non-life.
I draw on Chen for inspiration with reference to animacy’s possible transgressions, as it offers a different way to conceive of relationality and intersubjective exchange. Chen is invested in using affect as a mediator of queerness and race in biopolitics to revamp live and dead zones. I examine Chen’s definition of animacy with reference to oil and with regard to Emirati indigenous-raced formations to produce noticeable affect (Chen 2012, 6). Queer theory has reformulated how affect is understood as related to animacy, particularly when it comes to death, mourning, trauma, shame, and loss (Chen 2012, 11). Drawing on Chen’s work, and on the suggestion that queering is immanent to animate transgressions between human and inhuman things, I demonstrate that Emirati post-oil networks violate proper intimacies.

In his study on capitalism in the Middle East, Hanieh underlines that the fetishization of the oil commodity can lead to a methodological exceptionalism that obscures serious examination of the questions of capitalism and class (Hanieh 2013, 123). Hanieh refocuses attention on the characteristic of the Arab Gulf states’ own class and state formation to show how they have developed a particular form of political economy that remains, regardless of its specificities, fully capitalist and subject to the same dynamics as other neighboring states and that is used as a mechanism for class discipline (Hanieh 2013, 123–124). He explains that Arab Gulf rulers have embedded labor exclusion into the spatial structuring of class, denying laborers access to equal rights and controlling the Arab Gulf rulers’ rise to power.

Hanieh argues that the spatial structuring of class is a form of social control that is a

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15 Indeed, as Chen’s seminal work argues, the givens of death are racialized, sexualized, and animated in specific biopolitical formations (Chen 2012, 6). Chen examines biopower at both the individual human subject level and the governmental level.

16 Another intervention that engages with the role of oil whilst moving beyond its fetishization is Timothy Mitchell’s Carbon Democracy, where he argues that in oil-producing countries, global oil networks depend on morally conservative and politically stable forces. He defines “McJihad” as a concept that directs attention to the impossibility of securing the enormous profits of oil except through arrangements that rely on these dynamic but seemingly uncapitalist social forces (Mitchell 2011, 203; 213).
necessary corollary to the Arab Gulf’s ascension as a core zone within the global economy. He also notes that the various laws and regulations governing migrant workers’ conditions in the Arab Gulf states are the legal expression of the spatial structuring of class and control of the majority of the population (Hanieh 2013, 127). If all these workers were granted equal labor and citizenship rights, he says, these regulations would disappear because of this connection. Therefore, the problems with these laws are not merely legislative weaknesses or policy oversights; they “cannot be solved without challenging the inherent structure of the system itself” (Hanieh 2013, 126).

Within indigenous race formation, both the intimate and the inanimate are central to the relationship between oil and animacy. Two major subject groups that are produced within Gulf oil networks in the UAE include an indigenous Emirati population that is privileged, and a South Asian migrant community, which is subordinated through an exploitative labor relationship, amongst others. The mobilization and management of certain bodies is thus a by-product of oil networks. Race is formulated within the relationship between these subject groups. Race is therefore engendered within the Emirati context, specifically when intersecting with class with reference to the migrant labor issue. Drawing on Hanieh, I seek to extend this idea of class and precarity by building on an analysis of oil that is outside its reification, namely its relationship with animacy, where it can produce affect and injury. One effect of post-oil violation is taken up by the migrant labor question. Migrants from South and Southeast Asia are implicated in the biopolitical development of the UAE and its post-oil networks. Taking the Emirati national biopolitical project into account, I ask who is included in the fold of the nation state and who is excluded and/or abjected. While the labor community is central to the
development of biopower, it is clear that it is included in its formation and abjected in its execution. Migrants do not take part in the benefits and privileges that are afforded to nationals, and they are implicated in systems of exploitation (Vora 2013, 14; Kanna 2011, 16; 95). Abu Dhabi’s Saadiyat Island has garnered much attention as a site of labor exploitation. The Island is a construction project with the aim of building the “cultural district” of Abu Dhabi, containing a Guggenheim Museum, a Louvre Museum, a branch of NYU, and luxury hotels, golf courses, and villas. In pursuit of this cultural hub, there have been many recorded complaints of low wages and both physical and mental abuse of construction workers. One NGO estimates that, among construction workers in the country, there are an average of three suicides a week (Hanieh 2013, 130–131). Following the release of such figures, activists and academics sought to challenge the systems that allowed such violations to continue.¹⁷

The relationship between oil and animacy is also tied to Emirati sexuality. Shame, which is found specifically in the formation of national sexuality, is another effect of post-oil violations of intimacies. I define national sexuality in the Emirati context as that which refers to reproductive heteronormativity in line with sexual regeneration and indigenous continuance. A senior psychiatrist, Dr. Ali al-Harjan, is considered to be a leading authority in the field of sexuality and mental health in the Emirates and enjoys a high media profile. He speaks extensively about homosexuals in the Emirates and tensions in the country resulting from their presence. He explains how

¹⁷ Andrew Ross of NYU is one such academic, who in vocal protest of the Saadiyat Island project, has been banned from the UAE, as he and the Gulf Labor Coalition have been drawing attention to Saadiyat Island and the conditions of migrant workers there. For further reading, see Andrew Ross, 2015, The Gulf: High Culture/Hard Labor (New York: OR Books); Ahmed Kanna, 2011, Dubai: The City as Corporation (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press); and Neha Vora, 2013, Impossible Citizens: Dubai’s Indian Diaspora (Durham and London: Duke University Press).
queers imagine those living in the West as “living in paradise,” while they “live under pressure” in the UAE. This, he argues, allows them “to come together and deviate from their existing social sphere,” adding that “they cause and create an atmosphere of family terror.” This sentiment of sociofamilial alarm surrounding the queer subject is also encapsulated in an email I received from Maryam Al-Hamly, an employee at Dubai’s international media relations bureau. She says, “There is a huge sense of moral panic amongst straight people and families. For example, Arab women feel that not all the men are straight anymore. Due to the stigma attached to coming out as a queer, some people have social and family obligations that force them to keep their sexualities hidden ... Another issue is the mothers or future mothers in Gulf society who fear their children turning out lesbian or gay, or other queers’ influence on their children that would alter their sexual identity—which originally in the Gulf should be straight, as our religion requires us to be.” Al-Hamly’s words elucidate the extent to which national sexuality is ideologically central to notions of the familial and the domestic. As Massad proposes, the idea that Islam requires people to be “straight” is anachronistic, and often goes along with the belief that homosexuality is a Western construct. However, the belief that there is no homosexuality in the Middle East calls “straightness” into question, as, by this logic, it was also “invented.” While Massad refers to those who participate in the Gay International, an Emirati perspective in this context indicates that a similar logic is demonstrated as a response to Western discourses (2002). The complex of honor and shame is also central to the Emirati sex/gender system, such that deviations from the norm instigate “family terror” in the name of social dishonor. This is also evinced in Al-Hamly’s statement regarding the concealment of queer sexuality so as

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18 Dr. Ali al-Harjan, interview with the author, September 2015.
to protect one’s own family from defamation. The reference to mothers and wives further underscores the centrality of the domestic and the familial within this system, while simultaneously upholding heteropatriarchy as the central principle of Emirati sexuality.19

Queering the Indigenous

The belief that the indigenous represents a heterosexual site a priori, but one that, nonetheless, can be queered, is also manifest in Al-Hamly’s rhetoric, most pertinently in the statement that sexual subjects in the Gulf are “originally straight” and that queers have the power to alter others. This idea is reinforced by Maryam Al Salman, the director of The Female Rehabilitation Home in Sharjah, who states, “the increase of...those who suffer from issues of deviancy... is related to the general openness [on the world]. The world is now a small village. Anyone can enter, there is no surveillance. Even if you have tight surveillance – there is no point if you have not already planted a consciousness in them, [otherwise], everything is allowed according to him. This is what happened here [in the UAE]. We have been impressed by external appearances through electronic communications. So indeed, there is an increase [in queer subjectivities].”20 The understanding that the Emirati subject is essentially queered by an external or peripheral site resting on the margins of the home and the nation

19 While refraining from marriage is associated with queers within the context of non-procreative non-citizenship, marriage is also paradoxically seen as promoting homosexuality, since it may in certain contexts constitute an obstacle and hindrance to young men in terms of complications surrounding notions of cultural, social, and economic capital. It is understood that these complications encourage same-sex practices, since such practices transcend specific social pressures (Dr Ali al-Harjan, interview with the author, September 2015, and Maryam al-Hamly, email to the author, 2015).

20 Maryam Al Salman, interview with the author, September 11, 2015
recalls Gayatri Gopinath’s much celebrated work on queer diaspora. In *Impossible Desires*, Gopinath characterizes the diasporic subject as one that troubles national identity. She celebrates diaspora as a concept for its potential to foreground notions of impurity and inauthenticity that resoundingly reject the ethnic and religious absolutism at the center of the nationalist project. Gopinath aligns diaspora with queerness and argues that a queer diasporic framework productively exploits the analogous relation between nation and diaspora, on the one hand, and between heterosexuality and queerness, on the other; in other words, “queerness is to heterosexuality as diaspora is to nation” (Gopinath 2005). The belief that the diasporic is both aligned with the queer and simultaneously that which queers the national is a dominant and recurring interpretation of the rise and dissemination of queers in the UAE.

The penal code in the UAE does not explicitly prohibit homosexuality, but it does outlaw male drag. Despite this, manifestations of queer cultures such as the popular male cross-dressing band *Um’Alayah* have existed in the UAE for many years, since well before the emergence of the Federation in 1971 (Al-Qasimi 2011, 295).

*Um’Alayah*, alongside similar indigenous groups, are seen as remnants of historical encounters with the African slave trade in this region and are examples of Emirati queer hybridity, rooted in the non-national.21 Following this, queer cultures demonstrate how a national culture can be simultaneously influenced by the indigenous as well as the regional. Here, I use indigenous to describe the ethnic group constituting Arab-Wahhabism within the Arab Peninsula. Members of this group identify in terms of blood purity, with reference to Bedouin or coastal tribal

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families in this region. They distinguish themselves as different from those Arabs mixed with ethnic minorities, such as those with Turkish or Persian backgrounds, as well as other ethnic categories from neighboring territories.

During my fieldwork, a number of my interviewees presented this idea where, for example, the queer indigenous subject was seen to have been influenced and transformed by contact with an array of diasporic sites, be they the rapid growth in the number of expatriates and the ubiquity of their contaminating culture, the foreign mother of Emirati children, or their Filipina nanny. Fadwa Al Mughairbi, a psychologist in Abu Dhabi, remarked upon the influence of foreigners with reference to the emergence of Emirati queer culture, stating:

Last year, or two years ago, I noticed interesting things [that] I never saw before. Two males were going in the mall, and they were [wearing] make-up and dressed in tight clothes, they were Lebanese or Syrian...and they were walking...in Al Ain mall, which you don’t usually see [so openly] in Al Ain, it being a little bit [of a] conservative society. But now you see these things. Foreigners they do it overtly, [like] Filipinos. But you don’t expect Arabs to do it openly.\textsuperscript{22}

Al Mughairbi’s comments align the presence of foreigners with queer Arab subjects, seeming to correlate the presence of the first with the increased visibility of the second.

Interestingly, the religious cleric Sheikh Aziz Farhan Al-Anzi also upheld the diasporic as responsible for queering the indigenous; however, in the following instance, he is referring to foreign countries, with the subject queered as a result of trespassing the geographical borders of her own nation. He states, “Amongst the reasons which have contributed to promoting homosexuality and perversion is women traveling to dissolute countries alone without a male guardian and the

\textsuperscript{22} Fadwa Al Mughairbi, interview with the author, September 14, 2015.
fortifying maintenance of Sharia’ culture,” which protects them from committing such evil things. Al-Anzi adds, “Without it they fall into serious misdeeds or become the victim of straying ideas and perverted imaginations.”23 The examples discussed earlier reveal that the queering of the indigenous lies in the peripheral; manifested in, among other phenomena, satellite TV and cyberculture, which putatively signify the West, the foreign, and the alien. This, alongside the alignment of queerness with the Western world, posits the indigenous/national subject as always already heterosexual, yet with the potential for transformation, even if only as a result of foreign or peripheral influences. This sentiment is instantiated in the views of Emirati cultural protectionists and die-hard nationalists who align both contemporary queer sexualities and indigenous queer practices with the foreign.

As previously mentioned, the state recognition of the younger generation’s potential to revitalize its national image and additional governmental programs aimed at retaining its young citizens have developed rapidly over the past several years. The development of “youth projects,” where the government provides capital and specific expenditures as loans to young nationals, exemplifies this scope. Funding bodies such as Ruwwad, the Khalifa Fund, and the Mohammed bin Rashid Fund have been supporting youth entrepreneurial initiatives across the UAE for Emirati nationals.24 One example of such a project is the Gossip Café, owned by Shayma Fawwaz. In an interview, she describes the onset of funding opportunities and concomitant notions of Emirati indebtedness: “The funding is for Emiratis, and while it was not enough to fund the location, what they give always helps. What is good about these places like

23 Al-Anzi, interview with the author, circa 2012.
24 These groups were all established in the last 15 years; Ruwwad was founded in 2005, the Khalifa Fund in 2007, and the Mohammed Bin Rashid Fund in 2013.
Ruwwad, Khalifa Fund, Mohammed bin Rashid Fund, and Tijari is that they give entrepreneurs a payback period of one year where you don’t have to pay back the loan immediately. Alternatively, they can give you loans without interest.”25 She describes the notion of giving back to the UAE as something that ought to be inherent in an Emirati citizen: “I know our government is always pushing Emiratis to do things. But when you are brought up like this, it is already in your blood. Someone needs to work for their homeland. I cannot disconnect it. It is not all the government’s responsibility to tell you what to do. It shouldn’t be the government telling you to be a better person, give back to your country, do this, do that. If you are brought up properly, you will have these pillars in you.” Shayma is an example of a local business owner in the Emirates who maintains strong ties with local initiatives, charities, and the government, emboldening her claim to “give back” to the homeland.

As Crystal Ennis argues, the promotion of entrepreneurship in the GCC is noticeably increasing as entrepreneurship promotion is a vehicle for state patronage (Ennis 2015, 116–117). It is also regarded as a necessity to pursue entrepreneurship as a way to diversify local economies, which are on the rise since 2011 in the GCC (Ennis 2015, 125).26 The augmentation of entrepreneurship as a national project in line with the biopolitical is manifest in the escalation of recent initiatives across the UAE. In Sharjah, two manifestations of national entrepreneurial initiatives specializing in training pilot projects can be found in the government-sponsored non-profit Sheraa,

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26 Ennis uses the example of Qatar here, but an analysis of all the GCC economies can be found at https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/71898/.
launched in 2016, and *Jeel*,\textsuperscript{27} a joint government initiative launched in December 2015.\textsuperscript{28} Returning to the theme of lines, it could be said that the summoning of the post-oil generation into the entrepreneurship fold can be likened to lines in so far as it becomes about controlling inclinations so as to impose rules more easily. The rise of entrepreneurship and feature accelerators such as *Sheera* and the Mohammed Bin Rashid Fund are indicative of the biopolitical folding of the Emirati national project. Indeed, this is paralleled in a conversation I had with Hashim Al-Zaabi, a young Emirati entrepreneur who agrees that these initiatives are a response to specific political and socioeconomic events in the region. From his point of view, rulers are negotiating long-term strategies in a context of anticipated oil depletion and environmental change as, in his words, “They are hitting the problem from the roots.”\textsuperscript{29} This approach can, therefore, be seen as a strategy for economically folding citizens into the nation state to meet the objective of post-oil economic regeneration.

In addition to the rise of local business initiatives, the active importation of Western universities such as NYU and the Sorbonne is shown to impact the number of younger Emiratis who remain in the UAE, with fewer people leaving for study abroad. The government has successfully promoted museums and other forms of cultural and education tourism to curtail the desire to leave the country in search of broader cultural exposure.

\textsuperscript{27} This initiative was launched by the Sharjah Business Women Council and the Establishment of Education for Employment, also established in 2015. It provides a space to nurture start-ups and expand the scope of business structures and their networks. Although funding opportunities have been limited to nationals, more recent programs have begun to allow greater numbers of non-nationals to qualify for entrepreneurial projects.

\textsuperscript{28} Other opportunities have also been afforded to non-nationals, including: *Sheraa*, in5, Astrolabs, Dtec, and DFA, which offer support to both nationals and non-nationals. All of these provide co-working spaces, subsidized licenses, mentors, and even, in the case of DFA, significant funding. They are also all linked to free-zones, which means that non-nationals can start businesses without needing to have an Emirati partner (which is still the case on shore, where Emiratis must own at least 51% of the company on paper) (Najla al-Midfa, General Manager at the Sharjah Entrepreneurship Center, in an interview with the author, 2017).

\textsuperscript{29} Hashim Al-Zaabi, interview with the author, 2017.
These examples can be seen to represent a biopolitical summons to the nation’s youth: an economic regeneration underpinning a post-oil economy. The relationship between the national youth and the state is one of duty and symbolic indenture. Thus, their compliance serves not simply to shore up a vulnerable apparatus but further renders this generation responsible for repaying the debt incurred by building a post-oil economy. Ahmed’s lines and networks indicate that social investments in the post-oil generation are expected to deliver “return” in this context. Thus, taking the biopolitical implications of debt impels us to ask: to what extent can these lines and networks also be cut?

One clear example is the alignment of the queer with failure. In an interview, the psychiatrist Dr. Adel Karrani explained a sentiment that associates queers with failure in the figure of the boyah. A boyah (boyāt: Arabic pluralized form) is a female masculinity and butch subjectivity seen in the Arab Gulf. Boyāt gained visibility at the millennium and became more apparent following 2005, both online and publicly.30 Karrani states, “I haven’t seen a boyah that has a respectable degree. It has been observed that many of them [people who are sexually deviant] are not as successful or as good examples in society. And this is where the issue is: is it sexual deviance that the people are not accepting or is it their behavior?”31 He adds, “The more they fail or the more they will be unsuccessful, the more they move toward their sexual deviation and then the less they will be accepted by society.”32 Success in heteronormative terms is often equated with the idea of success in regenerative terms; that is, advancement, capital accumulation, family, ethical conduct, and hope.

31 Dr. Adel Karrani, Skype interview with the author, 2015.
32 Ibid.
J. Jack Halberstam argues that queer and other subordinate counter-hegemonic practices lead to the alignment of failure, nonconformity, anti-capitalist practices, non-reproductive lifestyles, negativity, and critique (Halberstam, 89).

In this way, boyahs are seen to fall outside of the succession of the national line, and initiatives of rehabilitation and repair have proliferated in recent years to act as straightening devices for queers. In 2007 the UAE’s Ministry of Social Affairs launched the campaign “Excuse me, I am a girl,” which adopted a non-threatening approach in addressing queer subjects. As a response to the rise and increasing visibility of musterjala, which can be translated as “masculine femininity,” the Ministry advocated the importance of government initiatives in “engaging with a brave idea which confronts some undesired behavior in our society.”33 In his article, Paul Amar focuses on forms of resistant and subversive praxis that challenge normative infantilization and test the idea of developmentalist futurism (Amar 2016, 579). Focusing on resistant praxis and queer dissidence, he recounts how children were an active political force in the 2011 Arab uprising. In his work, Amar examines youthful agency and draws on the notion of failed youth and queer children within queer theory. Building on the work of Edelman, he explains how reproductive futurity has come to stand in opposition to queer potentiality and creative subversion. Amar goes on to explain how, despite his intentions, Edelman underlines how the heteronormative parent comes to signify vehicles of security practices. The trajectory of reproductive futurity and developmentalist teleology laid out by Amar

proves useful in so far as the rehabilitation of boyahs is concerned. It encapsulates what he describes in his works as the “human security state” in operation, therein replacing the redistributive apparatus of the welfare state (Amar 2016, 570).

Nowhere is the state enforcement of security against contagion better encapsulated than in the story of Nasser, a 38-year-old man who contracted HIV at the age of 18 and has lived in government clinics for the duration of this time. He was recently released from a facility in Abu Dhabi called the Baniyas Centre. The Centre, however, stipulates that a family member must consent to Nasser’s release. He is not allowed to leave the clinic unsupervised, and he attended his father’s funeral in handcuffs accompanied by security guards (Al-Nowais 2015). Crucially, however, the ministerial Emirati HIV decree, published in 2010, states that HIV-infected nationals should not be detained and that authorities shall provide social, financial, and spiritual support to the patient and his or her family in a way that guarantees them a decent life and prevents their isolation from society.\footnote{UAE Council of Ministers. \textit{HIV Law Presidential Decree: The Resolution of the Council of Ministers Number 29 for the Year 2010}. Kawa Morad (trans.) 2015.}

In line with Amar’s work, there is a clear underlying point in the way in which the state is acting as a heteronormative parent, generating vehicles of security that parallel the usage of rehabilitation and psychiatric intervention as straightening devices for deviant bodies.

As a part of the biopolitical project in the UAE, the state helps and encourages marriage between nationals. As a result, there has been a proliferation of marriage funds available to support this mission (Al-Qasimi 2015, 3–4). Nasser, as a national, often tries to access these programs and funds but is consistently rejected. The state did not accept his request to help him find a wife, and he stands outside of national
sexuality in so far as he does not qualify for a marriage fund because he is not seen as an active participant in the state-provided systems of regeneration. He stands as an example of what I refer to as Emirati queer “injury” in so far as he is situated outside of national sexuality while simultaneously transcending the homo/hetero dyad in this definition. In my conceptualization of queer injury, I refer to Wendy Brown, who regards “wounded attachments” as a form of identity production. She formulates her concept “through the framework of the convergence of subordination and exclusion that comes out of histories of racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. and the contemporary disciplinary production of those identities” (Brown 2006, 35). Indeed, Nasser’s case stands as an example of the intersection between neoliberal social management of subordinated populations and “wounded attachments” as a form of identity production. In the UAE, specific laws that dictate the treatment and care of HIV/AIDS patients were established in 2005. Dr. Farida al-Hosani, Manager of the Communicable Diseases Department in the Public Health Division in the Health Authority Abu Dhabi worked extensively on Nasser’s case. She discusses at length the rights that are afforded to patients with HIV/AIDS and the extent to which their well-being is taken care of.

Heteronormative parents and the state signify vehicles of security practices, as Nasser’s case exemplifies. Building on Amar’s take on Edelman, we can look at the parallels between his parents, who put him in isolation, and the state’s quarantine

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36 Dr. Farida al-Hosani stated in an interview with the author in October 2015, “Well, I think in terms of marriage, it is not clearly stated in the law. But I think in article 29 [of the ministerial 2010 HIV Decree], it mentions that HIV patients should not be discriminated against and that they should be treated as any other individual in the community, which gives them all the rights. What other rights should be included other than marriage? I mean other than study and work rights, it will be marriage, for sure.”
surrounding issues of contagion. Nasser states, “My family don’t want me. They left me here when I was first brought in and refused to take me in. My father was asked to claim me, but he just left me here and no one came. He told the guards that he didn’t want to speak to me and asked them to keep me detained. I tried to speak to him but he refused” (Al-Nowais 2015). Indeed, this resurrects the notion of queer “injury” and the power of the state as it relates to the control and management of bodies. Queer “injury” does not necessarily fall or maintain the opposition between hetero- and homosexuality, but still falls outside of national sexuality and reproductive heteronormativity. Nasser’s exclusion and rehabilitation is thus indicative of Emirati queer “injury” and also a form of failure. He falls outside both the idea of success(ion) and Emirati notions of lineage and reproduction; the Emirati biopolitical project, therefore, is not solely defined through its reproductive terms but also through ideas of economic regeneration.

Reyhan Hashmey, a doctor who works at Tawam Hospital in Abu Dhabi, explains the logic of profiling and surveillance in his story of a young mixed-race girl who was found abandoned in a dumpster outside a shopping outlet in the UAE, isolated from the rest of the children at a facility known as the Zayed Center, and eventually deported when found to have HIV. Deportation is often used as a method of racial securitization for non-nationals, which contrasts with the state’s response in providing rehabilitation and care to HIV-infected nationals. Indeed Al-Kumaiti, a lawyer based in Dubai, substantiates this point when he states that the government “does not talk about ethnic groups or a specific race. If a non-national is infected,
they apologize to him [to leave] so that he doesn’t infect others.”40 These words resonate with the thesis on racial securitization of Ahuja, who argues, “In the case of infectious disease, the public articulation of race often operates through logics of profiling, which aggregate various phenotypic and epidemiological cues into thresholds for state intervention.” He adds, “Race operates through actual material sites of bodily reproduction and contact that are subjected to surveillance in moments of crisis before they recede back into the grain of the everyday. Such ebbs and flows of racial securitization work to mask the persistence of race in the structures of governance” (Ahuja 2016). The aforementioned story of the mixed-race girl exemplifies the way race is subjected to surveillance in moments of crisis. Similarly, Ed Cohen notes that such selective immunity functions almost exclusively as a political and judicial term, thus creating “immunity-as-defence” (Cohen 2009, 3). He argues that, after the advent of immunity as defense, bioscience affirms that living entails a ceaseless problem of boundary maintenance. Less modern ideas about living beings ensconce organisms in a material world whose vital elements form—and whose fluxes and flows inform—their aliveness (Cohen 2009, 8). Thus, alongside deportation, it could be said that quarantine units in care centers and prisons across the UAE also function as such a defense, because HIV patients with “active AIDS”41 are put there until fit for release in order to protect Emirati society from the risk of disease transmission,42 as well as to protect them from the stigma related to their illness.43 Unlike Nasser’s case, the story of the mixed-race girl belies a racial differentiation of epidemiological risk that responds to specific technical logics aimed at controlling infection or burnishing national immunities.

40 Al-Kumaiti of Al-Kumaiti Associates, interview with the author, 2015.
41 Dr. Adel Karrani used this term in an interview with the author in 2015 to refer to HIV patients who have not yet had their illnesses managed via medication and healthcare.
42 Colonel Ahmad Aziz Shuheil, interview with the author, 2017.
43 Dr. Farida Al-Hosani, interview with the author, October 2015.
Ahuja goes on to say that the minoritized subject or population is often the subject of incorporation rather than exclusion; health discipline is often provoked by the specter of racial difference, even as containing risk means “domesticating foreign bodies and subjects into the imagined immunities of the settler nation” (Ahuja 2016, 6–7). However, my findings on HIV narratives and national immunities in the UAE contrast with Ahuja’s point, where nationals are afforded free healthcare and medication, unlike non-nationals, who are kept in isolation and/or deported. HIV foreign bodies are, therefore, not domesticated in the imagined immunities of the settler nation; rather, they are employed in a structure of boundary maintenance and abjection.

It could be said that the association of failure with the boyah is highlighted within and against a very specific notion of success that is being sold to the indigenous population, namely the notion aligned with the figure of the oil entrepreneur in this current political moment. In other words, success against petrocapitalist lines is manifest in the rise of oil entrepreneurship in this region. To what extent, therefore, would failure be seen as a breaking point and a transgression of the line? The figure of the boyah embodies a breaking point that stands outside of networks of regeneration, where cycles of biopolitical and economic success are not undertaken. In this light, the boyah is seen as a failure who operates independently of the logistics not only of capitalism and success but also of national sexuality. One can read the figure of the boyah and HIV narratives such as Nasser’s case as embodying a sign of Emirati post-oil failure and thus representing queer negativity in line with reproductive heteronormativity and pan-Gulfian heteropatriarchy. Indeed, given the centrality of succession and indigenous continuance in this geopolitical context, one may assign these manifestations of queerness as signifying a breaking point of
lineage and survival.

The notion of succession and regeneration is acutely manifest in the names Sheraa and Jeel, the national entrepreneurial youth training initiatives described earlier. Sheraa translates from the Arabic word for the sail of a boat, which in this context refers to the forward movement of progress and direction. Jeel, however, is the Arabic word for “generation.” These words encapsulate the Emirati biopolitical project in terms of the ideas of reproduction and renewal in the context of the post-oil generation. Indeed, the notion of forwardness signified in the sail of Sheraa stands in contradistinction to Love’s interpretation of queerness as signifying the backward and, as a result, sits inadequately within a narrative of progress. The queer body and queer social worlds, for Love, become the evidence of that failure, while the heterosexual is rooted in a logic of achievement, fulfillment, and success(ion) (Love 2007, 94). This is visibly manifest in the term Jeel, which signifies the idea of succession achieved not only through generational renewal and reproduction but also through the idea of success in economic terms.44

The idea of queer failure in this context, therefore, comes to embody an anti-nationalist discourse against Emirati petrocapitalist logics of succession and developmentalist futurism.45 Economic and sexual regeneration are thus institutionalized within the post-oil generation and petrocapitalism, further alienating queer bodies. Some bodies are excluded from national sexuality but

44 To further underscore this point, as part of Ruwwad, the fund for supporting youth projects in Sharjah, the al-Tumuh program was the first fund to be established in the country in 1997 to support and fund small projects (according to Islamic financing regulations; Dr. Khalid Mohammad Miqlid in an email with the author, 2017). The very name of the program, which translates from the Arabic as “ambition,” further exemplifies that ambition and success are defined in petrocapitalist terms.

brought into the fold of the nation state through rehabilitation and repair; others, however, are abjected entirely. Migrant laborers fall within the realm of those who are excluded, whereas deviant bodies such as boyahs and infected national bodies are reinscribed through rehabilitation and repair. Here, affect plays a role in the production of indigenous race formation; those who are rehabilitated and reinscribed are considered worthy of this network, whilst those that are abjected are not.

In her work, Ahmed uses the term “desire lines” to describe unofficial paths, those marks left on the ground that show everyday comings and goings, where people deviate from the paths they are supposed to follow. Deviation leaves its own marks on the ground, which can even help generate alternative lines that cross the ground in unexpected ways. Such lines are indeed traces of desire, marking where people have taken different routes to get to this point or that point (Ahmed 2006, 20). It is certainly desire that helps generate a queer landscape, shaped by the paths that we follow in deviating from the straight line (Ahmed 2006, 20). Ahmed’s description of desire lines is akin to Deleuzian lines of desires and tracings that move beyond genealogical lines and hereditary histories in trees (Ahmed 2006, 19). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari make a clear distinction between lines and trees and what they introduce as the rhizome. For them, trees and their roots embody Oedipal, hereditary, and horizontal reproducible tracings. They are stagnant and rely on hierarchical structure and redundancy. The rhizome is quite the opposite: an anti-genealogical symbol that maps instead of traces at a lateral level. In the Arab Gulf states, the extents to which political structures are drawn are with reference to notions of heredity and lineage, fortifying lines and trees that strengthen in relation to the idea of the genealogical. While the rhizome embodies anti-memory paths, Deleuze and Guattari explain that these lines and trees rely on history and
These concepts of rhizomes and tracings find good examples in the works of Ehteshami, who argues that in the Arab Gulf states, the leadership prefers reform from above to change from below. This is because it is itself an agent of change as a result of political and economic fallout from events in the 1990s, such as the invasion of Kuwait. Therefore, although the leadership had little choice but to reform, it has utilized traditional religious and tribal legitimacy to survive (Ehteshami 2003, 54–58). This exemplifies how tracings operate via genealogical lines. However, Yom believes cultural arguments for this reform, such as institutional destiny and exceptional legitimacy, are insufficient compared to cross-cutting coalitions between rulers and social constituencies, hydrocarbon wealth, and foreign patrons (Yom and Gause 2012, 75–77; 82–84). Indeed, such arguments stand as examples of tracings and lines from above.

In the Emirati context, new initiatives may appear at first as signifying generative ideas; however, I demonstrate how they stand as mere reproductions of pre-established systems. Entrepreneurial initiatives such as those discussed earlier are examples of such a tracing. Distinguishing from a tracing depends on establishing initiatives that do not rely on petrocapitalist power structures and hierarchies, which these initiatives continue to support. Though innovative, the entrepreneurial initiatives remain redundant. Other cultural projects, such as the Etihad Museum, which serves to collect, preserve, and display the heritage of the UAE, fail at being anything other than a tracing due to the self-regulated and selective histories represented. The Museum marks the unison of the Emirates and is a symbol of monarchical exceptionalism. Banners of the rulers hang from the building, celebrating the genesis of the UAE. The Etihad Museum is an example of a
genealogical structure that becomes a mere reproduction of itself. The cultural renaissance itself has thus been linear and imposed, using the efforts of migrant laborers to stage the celebration of national identity. In *Bioinsecurities*, Ahuja draws attention to Deleuze and Guattari’s romanticizing of Native American nomadic movements as rhizomatic “becomings” (Ahuja 2016, xv). Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari also execute a romantic reading of “Eastern” cultures as being rhizomatic in the movement of nomads (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 18). In their essentializing of the East, they fail to take into account the genealogical structures of heritage and kinship structure that operate in this part of the world. They also overlook the intricate, long, and ancient family trees of Arabs that create genealogical lines. In this context, tribal genealogical lines imply imposition and power and are vertical, as opposed to romanticized striated lines evoked in Deleuze and Guatarri’s project.

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, I wish to establish the way in which tracings manifest in new initiatives across the UAE are mirror reproductions of themselves and, in this case, are redundant genealogical articulations of the ruling elite. Along with entrepreneurial projects and cultural renaissance initiatives, other programs and resources available in the Arab Gulf states can represent inundated tracings. From the opening of an NYU or Sorbonne campus in the region to the establishment of franchises and imported businesses, while these look like attempts to create radicalist and interventionalist cultures, they are all examples of reproduced tracings and do not represent a resistant praxis. To become a rhizome, one must work outside of these structures. As Jafari Allen contends, “In nature, rhizomes arise from underground or underwater connections/roots/routes that are neither limited to one place nor destined to go only in one direction” (28). Emphasizing that the rhizome is distinctly different from roots and radicals, Deleuze and Guattari further elaborate
that the rhizome is about overcoming “a power takeover by the signified, a subjectification of affects” where lines of flight are blocked. When resituated on a map, rhizomes open up to possible lines of flight (1987, 12-14). Based on the tradition of hierarchy and genealogy in the UAE, I argue that a single lineage materialized following the emergence of the petrostate (Herb 1999, 55), thus perpetuating genealogical lines.

Anti-Generation

Of the lines that have been discussed so far, there is one individual who embodies the theme of the ancestral line and its breaking points most emphatically. The figure of Antigone is used in theoretical scholarship as a model for a feminist radical politics that resists and redefines the state. Antigone has a revolutionary legacy. She is lauded as a socially defiant feminist icon, but the cruel irony that serves as the foundation of her legacy is that her form of defiance leads to both her liberation and her death. Antigone represents a form of feminist and sexual agency. She is a
liminal figure between the family and the state as well as one who stands between life and death. Judith Butler suggests that she is construed as “anti-generation,” which here means an opposition to or distancing from previous generations. (Butler 2000, 22). Following this, and in the spirit of Deleuze, I regard Antigone as signifying antiline, moving as a rhizome. The figure of Antigone and her narrative serve as a political frame and metaphor for anti-generational lines defying the standard model of kinship relations. Her intricate family relation is seen as interrogating kinship and sexuality, which in turn question the state in the context of my work. Antigone is revered as an oppositional figure in philosophical thought and in queer theory. However, as far as my argument is concerned, Edelman’s acute rendition of Antigone represents the transgression of specific codes belonging to a class. Here, I draw on her as a figure that transgresses codes of privilege in the Emirati post-oil context.

In this region, the ruling elite installed hereditary control over state functions before oil, which preserved its political power in the petrostate (Herb 1999, 55). This lineage is not one solely related to territorial rule but also one that is increasingly shifting into the financial with an encroachment of entrepreneurial projects within the sovereign wealth fund (Valeri 2016, 5). While the support of the entrepreneur falls within bureaucratic systems that have been in place with rentier governance (Hertog 2010, 133), it is also indicative of an increased support in recent years that unwittingly draws attention to the relationship between citizens and the state. Returning to the figure of Antigone, I contend that the transgression of specific codes that Edelman interprets of her prove useful to the contravention of the sovereign wealth fund and its access by the Emirati post-oil generation, who are being reinscribed into the fold of the nation state through its biopolitical project. Following this, I propose the idea of anti-generation as a political metaphor for transgression in
this geopolitical context. Alongside access to the sovereign wealth fund for the new entrepreneurs, I also wish to underline the transgression of what Hanieh refers to as primitive accumulation (Hanieh 2013, 132). In this system, rulers have ultimate authority over the use of oil revenues, deploying the funds to placate allies by giving gifts and other tokens to support the monarchy.

Edelman’s thesis on “Queer Negativity” is here useful in establishing an understanding of negativity, a concept of anti-reproductive futurism. Edelman advocated that queers “embrace a certain negation endemic to our abjection within the symbolic” (Munoz 2007, 361). This is tied to the post-oil generation and the regeneration of the oil welfare state through the notions of reproduction, regeneration, and lineage. Elsewhere, Edelman argues, “as the death drive dissolves the congealment of identity that permits us to know and survive as ourselves, so the queer must insist on disturbing, on queering, social organization, and on queering ourselves and our investment in such organization. For queerness can never define an identity; it can only ever disturb one” (Edelman 2004, 17). This formulation is useful to me in so far as I conceptualize the post-oil generation as being situated within narratives of regeneration and reproduction. Thus, Edelman’s thesis on queer negativity is relevant in so far as it challenges the systems that operate state-sanctioned technologies of life in the UAE. I employ queering to disturb state-sanctioned systems of sexuality along with structures of respectability and heteronormative sexuality among others within the context of the Emirati oil welfare state. Furthermore, lines between and among the political elite encapsulate oil networks. If Antigone breaks the idea of kinship, breaking points and lines can be seen as ways of transcending certain privileged codes of indigenous kinship structures in the UAE. Oil networks stem not from just the machinations of oil and
petrocapitalism, but also from a sophisticated network of kinship structures among and between the elite, which actively excludes bodies from networks. Jarrod Hayes proposes that some roots have transgressive potential in his description of the mangrove tree, with its rhizomatic network of roots and anti-genealogical formation. He uses this metaphor to theorize potentially queer and heterogeneous networks that “open up the family tree to ‘unauthorized’ models of descent and, therefore, nonnormative sexualities” (2016, 4). I wish to look at rhizomes as a contesting theory to heteropatriarchal and petrocapitalist reproductive tracings that allows for an understanding of the way queer theory is engaged.

**Queer Dissidence**

The utility of queer theory as an engaged and indispensable mode of critical inquiry extends beyond the axis of straight and queer and avoids reductive categorizations such as the homo/hetero divide. Cathy Cohen suggests that “Queer theory stands in direct contrast to the normalizing tendencies of hegemonic sexuality rooted in ideas of static stable sexual identities and behaviors … the sexual subject is understood to be constructed and contained by multiple practices of categorization and regulation that systematically marginalize and oppress those subjects thereby defined as deviant and ‘other.’” For example, female sexuality outside the norms of ethnic kinship structures may transgress heteropatriarchy as opposed to heteronormativity. Cohen emphasizes how sexual categories are socially constructed and should not be the only focus of queer theory, and that more attention should be directed toward the distribution of power within categories (Cohen 1997, 438–439) Analogously, Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan argue that we ought not to render sexual subjects as uniformly oppositional or resistant to dominant institutions that uphold heteronormativity—queer subjects are not always avant-garde at all times and in all
places—and that universally applied modes of resistance and the politics of identity obscure the field of subjectivity in postmodernity (Grewal and Kaplan 2001, 670). I thus emphasize the utility of a postcolonial queer critique in resisting the appropriation of ethno-centric categories, including the ethnocentricity of white Anglo-American normativity, and Emirati maintenance of blood purity and blood lines. Queer critique unfolds how Emiratis might speak outside a language of Emirati ethnic identity categories, resisting economic and sexual regeneration, as well as ethnic reproductive heteronormativity. By solely aligning queer difference with homosexuality and trans-practices, I would not only be maintaining a Western-centric framework in defining those who stand outside dominant heteronormativity; I would, moreover, be failing to take into account how other sexual subjects relate to and deviate from the Emirati national sex/gender norm.

In my work, I would like to reclaim queer to its original conceptualization, where queerness is resistance (Cohen 1997). Queerness is not inherently transgressive, yet, it can be a site of transgressive operations outside of economic and sexual reproduction. I render the queer as that which transgresses the codes of privilege in the context of the Emirati oil welfare state. Codes of privilege here refer to the access, distribution, and maintenance of wealth underlining the field of power. Furthermore, it is important to note that not everyone shares the same access to privilege, and connections to the systems that keep these privileges in place vary depending on age and family connection. What makes the term queer especially relevant in this circumstance is its use within the context of the Arab Gulf and the patriarchal structures of reproductive heteronormativity that I discuss in this article.
In this geopolitical context, queer is that which opposes the state apparatus and operates outside frameworks that maintain the logics of Emirati post-oil networks, such as the Emirati national sex/gender norm, which implies heteronormativity and national security rather than race. As mentioned before, citizenship rights demarcate migrant workers from nationals. However, in addition, the privileged layers of citizenship are themselves stratified by relation and proximity to the ruling family (Hanieh 2013, 124). The notion of privilege as far as the post-oil generation and my work is concerned is demarcated by relation and access to post-oil networks, which relates one’s primary rights and responsibilities to kin. Thus, in Joseph’s opinion, this relational notion of self includes a relational notion of rights and responsibilities, which in contrast to an “individualistic” notion of self, rounds a person’s sense of rights and responsibilities in reciprocal relations with specific significant others (Joseph 2008, 30). Following this, the concepts of privilege and precarity do not stand in direct opposition and can simultaneously exist with one another. Thus, I use the term queer to signify expectations of sex, reproduction, and intimacy, and also to refer to the transgression of dominant and normative ideologies. The turn to post-queer studies has witnessed the shift of the usage of queer as that which transcends both identity and moves away from its signification as a locus of resistance. My referencing of the term queer in the title of this paper acts as a semi-conscious ode to Sedgwick’s reparative essay entitled, “Queerer than Fiction,” where she underlined that the only way to use the term queer was in the first person (Sedgwick 1996). In the context of the Arab Gulf states and so far as my political intervention is

47 Ahuja’s usage of queer as a notion of sexuality here is regarded as one that is beyond identity. Further, Deleuze and Guattari discuss the need for identity to be looked at outside the limits of genitalia, a framework that can be regarded as a precursor to queerness beyond the notion of sexuality (ibid).
concerned, I attempt to destabilize the notion of queer as representing the marginal and embodying that which stands outside or opposes the state apparatus (Warner 1999, 13; 25; 37; 52). Moreover, my theorization of queerness is aligned with a body of postcolonial queer scholarship that consciously transcends the fetishization of queerness as *always already* transgressive (Puar 2007).

It could be said that, until recently, queer did not feature as a descriptor in the Middle East or in Middle East studies. This has largely been due to recent interventions at the intersection of queer theory and Middle East studies, which have sought to argue for the need to adopt a transnational framework to revisit the region. It could be said that the relationship between the intervention of sexuality studies in this field in its earlier stages was dominated by conversations around Joseph Massad’s “Gay International” and his “Desiring Arabs,” which were presented alongside Orientalist tropes of sexuality in the Middle East. For example, Massad argues that the Gay International “produces homosexuals, as well as gays and lesbians, where they do not exist, and represses same sex desires and practices that refuse to be assimilated into its sexual epistemology” (Massad 2007, 163). For some time, Massad’s work set a tone for studying sexuality in the Middle East that challenged Orientalist understandings of the region. Since then, however, Middle

48 Here, Massad critiques discourses that situate the “progressive” West against “backward” Others in typical cases of colonial epistemology.

49 In *Desiring Arabs*, Massad is interested in how Arab intelligentsia have responded to Orientalist accounts of putatively Muslim and Arab sexual mores and practices over time whilst challenging universalizing sexual identity and sexual rights discourses in the Arab world. To him, Western accounts since the 19th century have invested sexual subjectivities and practices with cultural and civilizational value along evolutionary schema within larger colonial and imperialist contexts. He additionally critiques how Arab intelligentsia have also engaged in essentializing practices, but remarks that this has come in response to contact with Western discourses and Westerners.

East studies has attempted to challenge this reading by presenting the intersectionality of queer studies not only with work that engaged beyond binary and Orientalist accounts, but also with work that engaged with themes such as masculinity (Amar 2011), the biopolitical (Amar 2013),\textsuperscript{51} (Shakhsari 2012), cyberspace (Kuntsman, Al-Qasimi 2012), the question of Palestine/Israel (Hochberg 2010), and homonationalism and pinkwashing (Puar 2013), amongst others.

Despite its intentions, Mikdashi and Puar’s recent contribution to the field prioritizes polarization and reinstalls East–West binaries, thus risking mistranslation. Moreover, they suggest that we ought to re-examine the question of what queer theory may look like if it is not routed through Euro-American histories, sexualities, locations, or bodies. For example, academics during the 1990s sought to trace the flows of queer theory that contained hegemonic circuits rooted in colonialism (Mikdashi and Puar 2016, 215). Mikdashi and Puar have rightly pointed out that US-based scholarship and American studies remain foundational to queer theory and method, regardless of location, area, archive, or geopolitical histories (Mikdashi and Puar 2016, 215). However, despite intentions to subscribe to a post-colonial intervention, their critique nonetheless continues to maintain a binary between West and non-West. Queer studies as a field has evolved from Orientalist accounts to more postcolonial and transnational approaches (Marchand 2009). Following this, I seek not to neglect an imperialist history nor to apologize for the lexicon that is used in the field. Instead, in this paper, I seek for an intervention that moves beyond genealogical trajectories and binary oppositions of geopolitical histories. Examples of such interventions would be those that cut genealogical lines of power, and that fail

\textsuperscript{51} In The Security Archipelago, Paul Amar provides an alternative historical and theoretical framing of the refashioning of free-market states and the rise of humanitarian security regimes in the Global South by examining the pivotal, trendsetting cases of Brazil and Egypt.
to reproduce the nation-state.

My reception at Yale, and both the framing of my lesbian iconicity in the Arab Gulf and my “heroics” in the field of sexuality and queer studies, is indicative of the exotification of Middle East queer studies. It encapsulates what is described as “the commodification of area and of the local” as well as the reification of raw data with reference to the local in the global south (Mikdashi and Puar 2016, 215). During my lecture at Yale, I presented ethnographic material from the field that underlined the difficulty I have had in obtaining intervention and access to interviews in the UAE. The difficulty in obtaining access to information that then gets translated and presented within an Anglo-American hegemonic context and through a queer framework further fetishizes “raw data from the field” as both rare and exclusive. Moreover, my experience as an ethnographer is indeed singular and operates at the intersection of both privilege and precarity, in line with my object of study. Not only am I a woman from the UAE who comes from a privileged elite, educated and working in the West, but I also work with material that is perceived as “rare,” especially as it is centered around sexuality, a topic that has not been examined in academic research with reference to the Arab Gulf states. This is collapsed by my own reification as an Emirati “queer subject,” which further renders my own implication in the field of Middle East studies as particularly unique. Thus, the intersection of privilege and precarity is not only manifest in terms of my object of study—the Emirati post-oil generation—but also with regard to the commodification of my own reified subjectivity as exemplified at Yale.

**Disavowal**
Following the Arab Spring, controversies regarding benefits to citizens were rife, where many state salaries were noted as having increased notably, despite general disarray in the region. These benefits have in a way disavowed the post-oil generation, as they benefit from a system that passes down privileges from generation to generation. This is part of an effort to support the indigenous population and its growth and success(ion) along biopolitical and genealogical lines. Ennis refers to this system as an exchange: the state provides for its citizens in exchange for political apathy (Ennis 2015, 119). Crucially, the term political apathy employed by Ennis is problematic in this context, since it denies the historico-political framework in terms of the region’s history with resistance movements.\textsuperscript{52} The post-oil generation has become complacent in a system that maintains hierarchical and ancestral networks and codes of privilege, emboldening horizontal lines. The national biopolitical project demands economic and reproductive participation. Non-participation in this context is aligned with resistance, meaning not only queer non-participation, but operating outside the biopolitical networks of oil. Complacency is therefore a disavowal of the national biopolitical project, raising the question: does the post-oil generation acquiesce their consent to repay the debt that they owe the state for all these privileges? Thus, folding loyalty and responsibility becomes a tool with which the nation can guarantee autonomy in making decisions and also a way to decrease potential for resistance movements. Revolution is a long-term process, and by ensuring codes of privilege are held up for generations, political resistance is subdued for equally long terms.

\textsuperscript{52} The fact that there has been political activism in the region is often disregarded (see Kuwait, Bahrain, Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, Oman until the 1970s; and all these places, except Qatar and to a certain extent the UAE, since 2011).
Following the regional uprisings, many also argued that entrepreneurial opportunities and increases to salaries were made for nationals, thus engendering counter-revolutionary paradigms across the region (Jones 2011). Rashid El-Sheikh, in an interview, counters this with strict conviction. “Of course this is not true ... In the UAE we are among the first countries to have established funds that encourage the youth to do independent work at the level of the state.”

He insists that funds were established long before the oncoming of the regional uprisings and that there were no ties to this increase to other regional events. El-Sheikh denounces any conspiracy theories that have developed over the years about where UAE support is given, and he remains a proponent of the state as a father figure, nurturing its constituent children.

What El-Sheikh describes as a father taking care of its children, many others may construe as strategic alliance development. Indeed, it is established that, in this region, oil and gas reserves are used to pay for social welfare programs that their states have enabled. These programs are ways to create social alliances and keep unrest at bay (Yom and Gause 2012, 83). While such interventions have always been implemented, as the Arab Gulf states have a long-standing tradition of alliance building with their citizens, the suspicion revolves around whether it increased during the regional uprising (Davidson 2013, 10; 117; 191). However, Brigadier Khalfan responds in an interview, “The recent uprisings in the Gulf? There are no uprisings in the Gulf. I think the revolutions of the Arab Spring in the region made Emiratis get closer to their leaders ... we are a people that cannot live in chaos. I mean what happened around us of chaos and destruction made us feel that we have a

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54 Similar arguments have been made about neighboring GCC Countries (see Ennis 2015, 125), though they have justified their increased expenditure and focus on entrepreneurship as a means of diversifying their economies beyond their oil-dependent income.
diamond and we have a base that we should not disrupt. It proved to us that our government system, even though it is hereditary, is based on social justice.”

With this complex and convoluted system, one further asks: where can agency be found? The Gulf is seen as a locale where there is an availability for the substitution of work by a foreigner. A common narrative is that a success story in this part of the world is one that has been executed by foreign labor (Vora 2013), whether European or South Asian, contributing to the perception that Emiratis allocate work rather than doing it themselves. However, as previously established, the new biopolitical project produces a platform for young Emiratis to prove themselves successful through entrepreneurship. Hashim Al-Zaabi is an example of one such young Emirati, seeking to prove his work ethic and value: “They need to understand that this generation is not like it was 30 years ago ... we need to work even harder, because all of them have a perception of us that we don’t work as hard, and we need to prove that wrong.”

While Al-Zaabi sees his intervention as profound, it reproduces old patterns because it participates in indebtedness to the state. Entrepreneurial projects such as Sheraa and Jeel also seemingly present radical breaks by trying to expand the boundaries of economic participation, such as drawing in working class and rural women. These initiatives try to move beyond opportunities within oil entrepreneurship, which are open to those primarily within merchant families or ruling families. These attempts may appear as lateral attempts to sever vertical lines; however, they merely reinscribe a notion of what success looks like within oil networks.

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55 Brigadier Khalfan, interview with the author, September 2015.
57 Hashim Al-Zaabi, interview with the author, 2017.
In this region, the landscape relies on a “cut and paste” approach of imported labor and global franchises. In this light, Al-Zaabi aims to underline the centrality in generating ideas about Emiratis that extend beyond the stereotypical, that is, of reliance on foreign labor. In the spirit of Deleuze, it could be argued that importing foreign labor or installing an NYU campus embodies a tracing. He argues that it is “instead like a photograph or X ray that begins by selecting or isolating, by artificial means such as coloration or other restrictive procedures, what it intends to reproduce” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 14–15). He continues, “The imitator always creates the model, and attracts it. The tracing has already translated the map into an image; it has already transformed the rhizome into roots and radicles” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 14–15). Thus, one could argue that models produced by imitators continue to reproduce themselves as tracings. The rise of new entrepreneurs in the UAE may at first be presenting itself as a unique mode of engaging with young ideas to present new breakthroughs that go against the older methods of depending on others to execute projects. The support of such projects and their symbolic folding into national biopower, however, have already transformed the rhizome into roots and radicles (Deleuze and Guattari, 14–15).

Al-Zaabi’s intervention into defying stereotypical ideas about Emiratis in the workplace was paralleled in a discussion I had with Wael al-Sayegh, a business owner and martial arts expert, who also substantiates the idea that the Emirati is incapable of self-discipline. As he expands on the point, while being an Arab and Emirati may have had its privileges in the UAE, this is no longer the case, as a generation expresses this position as being equally precarious in attempt to move beyond identitary limitations. He states, “You have parents that understand their children need to develop an ability to self-discipline. As an entrepreneur and future business
leader, these are skills that are given ... A lot of people that come to me I refer to as ‘new age Emiratis’; these are people that intrinsically realize that they have a little bit more of self-awareness to them. In a sense, they say ‘OK, the time I grew up was a different time, and I know I am suffering because of this and that, and I don’t want my kids to go through that’ ... being an Emirati is not enough. Being an Arab is not enough to survive; you need to be your own person, you need to supply your own uniqueness.”

Crucially, a sense of uniqueness here could be aligned with a rhizomatic becoming, a movement that operates without a “central automaton” or a “General” or a “funding body”; a movement that moves beyond identitarian claims and categories, be they “lesbian heroics” or a sense of privileged Emiratiness. In this regard, the rise of the new entrepreneur is a tracing, because it engenders class discipline and reappropriates the same circuits. This incentivization, however, operates within the same networks of privilege and still does not challenge genealogical lines. Assessing the inherited and genealogical vertical lines, as opposed to striated vertical and lateral lines, I suggest that agency for the post-oil generation in the UAE can be located laterally rather than vertically. I seek to disrupt the current flows by, in the spirit of Deleuze, drawing a map on this part of the world where there is an inundated history of lineage and inheritance. My proposition of breaking points implies cutting networks that exist and situating new flows. Such projects would exist outside of credit/debt dynamics, and include those living outside the boundaries of the nation-state and not giving back to it through economic or sexual regeneration. In one way, this map is moving forms of revolutionary desire in a different direction, cutting networks and reorganizing systems of domination and formations of

58 Wael al-Sayegh, interview with the author, 2015.
sexuality, as well as privileged race formation. Cutting these networks allows for lines of flight and for an opportunity against disavowal to be taken.

I have drawn attention to the rights-bearing subject, abjected from the national imaginary, as against the indebted subject who, in a moral economy of debt, is folded into the national imaginary. The subject of rights, the laborer, in this context has potential to mobilize revolutionary lines that cross laterally against the inherited lines of the indebted subject, who although privileged within networks of petrocapitalism, is simultaneously precarious and without rights. In this light, Gilbert Achar argues that “the long term revolutionary process in the region will be measured in decades rather than years. From a historical perspective, we are still in its initial stages. This should be a major incentive for intensive action to build progressive movements able to take the lead ... When I speak of progressive leaderships, it goes for me without saying that the workers movement should be a key part of them” (Achar 2015, 15). The labor community in the UAE is inscribed in a unique folding of “embedded exclusion,” folded in the development of the biopolitical nationalist landscape, yet excluded from its participation. Projects such as Gulf Labor and demonstrations led by Andrew Ross are thus reduced into sites of the production and regulation of identity as injury rather than vehicles of emancipation (Brown 1995, 134).59

In the context of the Gulf, transcending petrocapitalist flow creates lines of flight and opportunity for revolutionary desire. Indeed, this can only be achieved when we move away from hereditary and genealogical lines of lineage and survival. One must

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59 Indeed, this is certainly the case in as far as vehicles of repair are concerned. The derivative response by the state in this conversation is exemplified in better living conditions of those injured, albeit to preserve the global self-image of the state as well as to keep revolt and mobilization at bay (Brown 1995, 134).
consider what lines of flight would look like outside systems of petrocapitalism and the rentier state. Harking back to our introduction of Antigone, the transgression of disavowal and complacency imbedded within the codes of privilege engenders opposition, resistance, and revolution. In short, Antigone presents opportunities to move against complacency and non-participation, for lines of flight to be taken. It is in this domain of privilege, lineage, and survival, a by-product of the Emirati biopolitical nationalist project, that monotonous tracings of genealogy and hereditary lines can be found. I am drawing instead a rhizome that calls for an anti-genealogical intervention with reference to this geopolitical landscape. It is a call for individualism that functions laterally, growing against the movements of roots and trees, and embraces that which is anti-memory and anti-ancestral.
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