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Vernon, Patrick

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Patrick Vernon
University of Birmingham, UK

Abstract

Genocidal violence centrally targets the social bonds that hold communities together. In postcolonial contexts, it is well documented that social relations can be characterised by heteronormativity. Furthermore, postcolonial scholars have done extensive work on demonstrating the link between colonialism and genocidal violence. Responding to a gap in the academic literature, this article interrogates the relationship between (post)colonial heterosexuality and genocide. Seeing queer theory as also relevant to the study of non-queer individuals' experiences, this article argues that postcolonial genocidal violence can be characterised by attempts to impede heterosexual group reproduction. Using the Rohingya Genocide in Myanmar as an illustrative case-study, it argues that the emergence, character and legitimisation of violence here depended on the construction of heteronormative subject-positions. Furthermore, it argues that genocidal violence reinforces the subject-positions it is rooted in, giving them the appearance of immutable facts. From this basis, the article concludes that postcolonial genocidal violence can be read as a performance of heterosexuality.

Keywords

genocide, queer theory, Myanmar

Une lecture queer du génocide comme performance d'hétérosexualité

Résumé

La violence génocidaire vise principalement les liens sociaux qui unissent les communautés. Dans des contextes postcoloniaux, il est bien établi que les relations sociales peuvent être caractérisées par l'hétéronormativité. En outre, nombre de travaux de chercheurs postcoloniaux ont démontré

Corresponding author:
Patrick Vernon, Department of Political Science and International Studies, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, West Midlands, B15 2TT, UK.
Email: PXV467@bham.ac.uk

le lien entre colonialisme et violence génocidaire. À ce titre, cet article interroge la relation entre hétérosexualité (post)coloniale et génocide. Considérant la théorie queer comme pertinente dans l'étude de l'expérience des personnes non-queer, l'article soutient que la violence génocidaire postcoloniale peut être caractérisée par des tentatives d'entraver la reproduction d'un groupe hétérosexuel. En prenant l'exemple du génocide des Rohingyas au Myanmar, l'article soutient que l'émergence, le caractère et la légitimation de la violence dépendent ici d'une construction de positions sujet hétéronormées. En outre, il soutient que la violence génocidaire renforce les positions sujet dans lesquelles elle est ancrée, leur donnant l'apparence de facteurs immuables. Sur cette base, l'article conclut que la violence génocidaire postcoloniale peut être lue comme une performance d'hétérosexualité.

Mots-clés
génocide, théorie queer, Myanmar

El genocidio como performatividad de la heterosexualidad: Una lectura desde la teoría queer

Resumen
La violencia genocida ataca de manera central las relaciones sociales que mantienen unidas a las comunidades. En los contextos poscoloniales está bien documentado que las relaciones sociales pueden caracterizarse por la heteronormatividad. Es más, los académicos poscoloniales han realizado un extenso trabajo para evidenciar los vínculos existentes entre colonialismo y violencia genocida. Del mismo modo, este trabajo indaga en la relación entre la heterosexualidad (pos) colonial y el genocidio. Señalando la importancia de la teoría queer para las experiencias de los individuos que no son queers, este artículo sostiene que se puede describir la violencia genocida poscolonial como un intento de impedir la reproducción grupal heterosexual. Recurriendo al genocidio rohinyá en Birmania como un caso de estudio ilustrativo, se argumenta que la emergencia, el carácter y la legitimación de la violencia dependen aquí de la construcción de las posiciones de sujeto heteronormativas. Es más, se sostiene que la violencia genocida refuerza las posiciones de sujeto sobre las cuales esta se basa, dándoles la apariencia de hechos inalterables. Sobre esta base, el artículo concluye que se puede leer la violencia genocida poscolonial como una performatividad de la heterosexualidad.

Palabras clave
genocidio, teoría queer, Birmania

> *Mothers were gang raped in front of young children, who were severely injured and in some instances killed. Women and girls 13 to 25 years of age were targeted, including pregnant women. Rapes were accompanied by derogatory language and threats to life, such as, "We are going to kill you this way, by raping you". Women and girls were systematically abducted, detained and raped in military and police compounds, often amounting to sexual slavery.*[1]

Genocidal violence centrally targets the social bonds that hold a community together. In postcolonial contexts, these social bonds tend to be rooted in heteronormative logics

1. Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*', United Nations Human Rights Council, September 2018, 9.

which normalise heterosexual family units, binary understandings of sex and monogamous intimate relations.[2] Furthermore, postcolonial scholars have undertaken extensive work to demonstrate the existence of genocidal violence as a product of colonialism.[3] Given this, little has been said about genocidal violence as an expression of heteronormativity in these postcolonial contexts.

A small number of queer[4] scholars of genocide have done extremely well to uncover heteronormative logics in genocide discourses and violence against queers.[5] Despite this, the role that heteronormative logics play in violence against non-queers, as well as queers, has thus far gone unstudied. This article corrects this by characterising different stages of genocidal violence as distinct attempts to 'other' targeted groups and destroy social bonds amongst them. This occurs through the weaponisation of heteronormative logics, with the ultimate goal of preventing the group from engaging in successful heterosexual reproduction, characterised by an essential focus on futurity.[6] This, I contend, renders genocidal violence a performance[7] of (post)colonial heterosexuality. In making my case, I first outline the established literature surrounding the study of gender and genocide. Suggesting

2. See T. J. Tallie, *Queering Colonial Natal: Indigeneity and the Violence of Belonging in Southern Africa* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020); Chris Finley, 'Decolonizing the Queer Native Body (and Recovering the Native Bull-Dyke) Bringing "Sexy Back" and out of Native Studies' Closet', in *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature*, ed. Qwo-Li Driskill et al., (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 2011), and Andrea Smith, 'Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, nos. 1–2 (2010): 41–68, https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2009-012.
3. For e.g., see Dan Stone and Moses Dirk, *Colonialism and Genocide* (London: Routledge, 2008); Frank B. Wilderson, *Red, White & Black Cinema and the Structure of US Antagonisms* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); and Dylan Rodríguez, 'Racial/Colonial Genocide and the "Neoliberal Academy": In Excess of a Problematic', *American Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (2012): 809–13. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/41809528.
4. Sedgwick describes queer as 'the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't be* made) to signify monolithically'. It is this definition which guides my understanding of queerness, referring to an ontological and epistemological rejection of all processes of categorisation. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 8.
5. See Matthew Waites, 'Genocide and Global Queer Politics', *Journal of Genocide Research* 20, no. 1 (2017): 44–67, https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2017.1358920 and Lily Nellans, 'A Queer(Er) Genocide Studies', *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 14, no. 3 (2020): 48–68, https://doi.org/10.5038/1911-9933.14.3.1786.
6. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 2.
7. My understanding of genocide as a performative act has been partially informed by Ferrales Gabrielle, Hollie Nyseth Brehm, and Suzy Mcelrath's piece 'Gender-Based Violence against Men and Boys in Darfur', *Gender & Society* 30, no. 4 (2016): 565–89, 579, https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243216636331.

that this literature would benefit from greater consideration of heterosexuality, I then explore this theme through reference to scholars who see heteronormativity as a (post)colonial phenomenon. Noting that postcolonial scholars also see genocidal violence as a (post)colonial phenomenon, I situate my study in this gap, exploring genocide as an expression of heteronormativity in postcolonial contexts. After outlining my theoretical case, I demonstrate how this works in practice through reference to the Rohingya Genocide in Myanmar.

Gender, Sexuality and Coloniality

This section sets out established approaches to the study of gender and genocide, taking constructivist feminist readings of genocide one step further and linking genocidal violence to the heterosexual matrix.[8] Building on this theoretical premise, I draw on analyses of heteronormativity and genocidal violence as (post)colonial phenomena to argue that genocide is an expression of (post)colonial heterosexuality. Doing so, I situate my approach within the emergent body of scholarship that has already attempted to queer genocidal violence, explaining similarities and points of difference.

Mainstream analysis within genocide studies has tended to focus on the effectiveness of established frameworks and understandings, typified by the United Nations' Genocide Convention,[9] in responding to different violent events. This body of work[10] often sets about the task of critiquing and reformulating this established definition, discussing the use of terms in addition to or in replacement of genocide or quantifying/categorising different instances of genocidal violence. The incorporation of gender into the field of genocide studies marked a seismic shift in the 1990s, with Catherine Mackinnon's work on the use of rape as a tool of war being pivotal in highlighting the vulnerabilities of women in genocidal contexts.[11] This generated a huge increase in feminist genocide scholarship, largely focusing on the analysis of sexual violence committed against women in Rwanda

8. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Milton Park, Abingdon: Routledge), 151.
9. United Nations, 'Genocide Convention', 1948. Available at: https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/unts/volume%2078/volume-78-i-1021-english.pdf.
10. For e.g. see Rudolph Rummel, 'Democracy, Power, Genocide, and Mass Murder', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 39, no. 1 (1995): 3–26, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002795039001001. and Manus I. Midlarsky, *The Killing Trap: Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Matthew Krain, 'International Intervention and the Severity of Genocides and Politicides', *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (2005): 363–88, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2005.00369.x.
11. Catherine Mackinnon, 'Rape, Genocide, and Women's Human Rights', *Harvard Women's Law Journal* 17, no. 1 (1994): 5–16. Available at: https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?public=true&handle=hein.journals/hwlj17&div=7&start_page=5&collection=journals&set_as_cursor=2&men_tab=srchresults

and the Balkans,[12] but also including studies of women as perpetrators of violence.[13] Noting that feminist scholarship throughout the 1990s largely focused on the experiences of women, authors such as Adam Jones[14] have sought to incorporate men's experiences into the gendered study of genocide, including male experiences of sexual violence.[15] Such work has undoubtedly generated a much greater insight into the specific forms of victimising men through genocidal violence, but continues to see the gendered study of genocide as looking discretely at atrocities committed by or against men or women.

Building on this, the work of authors such as Charli Carpenter[16] and Elisa von Joeden-Forgey[17] has been of crucial importance, seeing gender as a symbolic structure that is imbricated in the way in which genocide is conducted. Joeden-Forgey identifies 'life force atrocities' as a hallmark of genocide, labelling these as acts perpetrated in order to 'inflict maximum damage to the spiritual core of those generative and foundational units we call families'.[18] These target individuals on the basis of their role within

12. See Marysia Zalewski, 'Well, What Is the Feminist Perspective on Bosnia?' *International Affairs* 71, no. 2 (1995): 339–56, https://doi.org/10.2307/2623438; Beverly Allen, *Rape Warfare: The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia* (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 1996); Roger W. Smith, 'Women and Genocide: Notes on an Unwritten History', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 8, no. 3 (1994): 315–34, 316, https://doi.org/10.1093/hgs/8.3.315 and Lisa Sharlach, 'Rape as Genocide: Bangladesh, the Former Yugoslavia, and Rwanda', *New Political Science* 22, no. 1 (2000): 89–102. https://doi.org/10.1080/713687893.
13. See Lisa Sharlach, 'Gender and Genocide in Rwanda: Women as Agents and Objects of Genocide', *Journal of Genocide Research* 1, no. 3 (1999): 387–99, https://doi.org/10.1080/14623529908413968; and Sara E. Brown, 'Female Perpetrators of the Rwandan Genocide', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 16, no. 3 (2013): 448–69, https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2013.788806.
14. Adam Jones, 'Gender and Ethnic Conflict in Ex-Yugoslavia', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17, no. 1 (1994): 115–34, https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.1994.9993815; Adam Jones, 'Gendercide and Genocide', *Journal of Genocide Research* 2, no. 2 (2000): 185–211, https://doi.org/10.1080/713677599; Adam Jones, *Gender Matters in Global Politics: A Feminist Introduction to International Relations*, ed. Laura J. Shepherd (New York: Routledge, 2015), 147-58.
15. For studies of male experiences of sexual violence see S. Sivakumaran, 'Sexual Violence Against Men in Armed Conflict', *European Journal of International Law* 18, no. 2 (2007): 253–76, https://doi.org/10.1093/ejil/chm013; and Ferrales, Nyseth Brehm, and Mcelrath, 'Gender-Based Violence Against Men and Boys in Darfur', 565–89, 574.
16. Charli Carpenter, 'Beyond 'Gendercide': Incorporating Gender into Comparative Genocide Studies', *The International Journal of Human Rights* 6, no. 4 (2002): 77–101, 80–81, https://doi.org/10.1080/714003779.
17. Elisa von Joeden-Forgey, 'The Devil in the Details: "Life Force Atrocities" and the Assault on the Family in Times of Conflict', *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 5, no. 1 (2010). Available at: http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/gsp/vol5/iss1/2; and Elisa von Joeden-Forgey, 'Gender and the Future of Genocide Studies and Prevention', *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 7, no. 1 (2012): 89–107, https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/gsp/vol7/iss1/10/
18. Joeden-Forgey, 'The Devil in the Details', 2.

group reproduction,[19] targeting women as mothers and forcing them to publicly participate in the murder of their own children, for example.[20]

Ontologically inspired by Joeden-Forgey, I ask where the gendered stereotypes which govern the conduct of genocide come from. In response, I find a particularly convincing answer in Butler's heterosexual matrix[21] and subsequently use this as a theoretical starting-point for my inquiry. The heterosexual matrix refers to the system of logic which produces 'biological sex' as we understand it, constructing 'men' and 'women' as two distinct categories through the performance of gendered traits and sexual desire for the opposite sex.[22] It is this system of logic that underpins heterosexual reproduction, rooting the subordination of women in perceived biological characteristics[23] such as caringness, emotionality and dependence. This renders women primarily responsible for child rearing and those who transgress binary gender norms perverse. Given that heterosexuality is the established norm for social relations globally, much greater attention needs to be paid to the way in which heterosexuality influences genocidal violence.

Whilst the heterosexual matrix is an insightful tool for studying the basis of genocidal violence, it is also important to note that it has been criticised as 'a curiously aspatial (and atemporal) concept'.[24] This is because it fails to locate the global emergence and normalisation of heterosexuality within the historical context of early colonialism, in which European norms of sexuality and gender were constructed in relation to non-European others.[25] I wholeheartedly agree with Patil and believe it is important to highlight the explicitly colonial origins of contemporary heterosexual norms.

Heteronormativity refers to 'the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent. . . but also privileged'.[26] In this sense, it refers to the institutionalisation of the norms of the heterosexual matrix. Contemporary heteronormativity is multi-dimensional and doesn't just refer to the normality of straight, monogamous, and cisgender subjects and the abnormality of all others. Instead, heteronormativity now has homonormative dimensions, in which queers in Western societies buy into the institutions of heteronormativity through 'a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption'.[27] Furthermore, contemporary Western hetero/homonormativity has racist and anti-Muslim dimensions, with the promotion of LGBTQ rights dependent on the curtailing of rights for Muslims

19. Joeden-Forgery, 'Gender and the Future of Genocide Studies and Prevention', 95.
20. Ibid., 25.
21. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 151.
22. Ibid., 151.
23. Ibid., 6.
24. Vrushali Patil, 'The Heterosexual Matrix as Imperial Effect', *Sociological Theory* 36, no. 1 (2018): 1–26, 2, https://doi.org/10.1177/0735275118759382.
25. Ibid., 4.
26. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner. 'Sex in Public', *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (1998): 547–66, 548. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1344178.
27. Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003), 51.

domestically and globally.[28] Consequently, it is impossible to look at heteronormativity without also integrating an understanding of racism.

In queer interrogations of colonialism, scholars have been unequivocal in tracing the origins of heteronormativity in (post)colonial societies to the establishment of colonial rule. Discussing the coloniality of gender, Maria Lugones argues that sexual dimorphism is a direct product of male-dominated bourgeois colonialism, as it forced previously accepted indigenous intersex people into the gender binary[29] and replaced gynecratic and egalitarian systems of government with patriarchal and hierarchical ones.[30] Similarly, focusing on settler colonialism in South Africa, Taille[31] draws attention to the way in which marriage law was used to support European men and women's claims to be there, replacing previously existing indigenous practices such as polygynous marriage. This imported a central pillar of heterosexual relations into an indigenous context, doing so using binary representations of monogamy/polygamy and civilised/uncivilised.

Also looking at the role of heteropatriarchal practices in indigenous elimination, Morgenson notes that the settler regulation of indigenous sexual relations, gender identity, marriage, and reproduction are key tools for restricting expressions of national difference.[32] Providing an example of gendered exclusions to 'Indian status', Morgensen notes that Canada's Indian Act (1876) imposed patrilineal inheritance which denied status to indigenous women with status and their children, if they married or bore children to someone without status.[33] This clearly demonstrates the role of regulating sexuality and gender in the establishment and continuation of colonial land appropriation and cultural destruction. Summarising the cumulative effect of this, Morgenson states that 'to promise that Western logics of gender and sexuality are universal is to enact the logic of settler colonisation', with these logics naturalising Western family structures, laws, identities, and ultimately, control.[34]

Looking more broadly at heteronormativity as a social institution, Finley argues that colonialism depends on heteropatriarchy to naturalise unequal gender relations and that without heteronormative ideas, heteropatriarchy and therefore colonialism would disintegrate.[35] It is on this basis that Andrea Smith advocates an integrated analysis of race,

28. Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).
29. Maria Lugones, 'The Coloniality of Gender', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Gender and Development*, ed. Wendy Harcourt (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 18.
30. Ibid., 11.
31. Tallie, *Queering Colonial Natal.*
32. Scott Lauria Morgensen, 'Theorising Gender, Sexuality and Settler Colonialism: An Introduction', *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no. 2 (2012): 2–22, 14. https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473x.2012.10648839.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid., 13.
35. Finley, 'Decolonizing the Queer Native Body, 34.

gender, and sexuality in studies of settler colonialism, seeing these as intimately connected vectors of colonial domination, as opposed to using identity categories as distinct and separate models of analysis.[36] Exemplifying this integrated approach, Smith draws attention to the subject position of 'the Native', who is imagined as an infantile citizen in the colonial project.[37] Such meanings persisting to the present day in discourses that invoke images of the 'crying Indian' to enable 'the birth of a white enlightened environmental consciousness'.[38] As such, Smith and other queer scholars do extremely well to highlight the specific role that the gendered and racialised dimensions of heteronormativity have played throughout the colonial project. Whilst a lot of this literature discusses contemporary settler colonialism in North America, the logics which underpin this are crucial to understanding gendered/sexualised power relations in the establishment and perpetuation of European colonialism globally. As a result, it directly informs my understanding of heteronormativity as a key technology of (post)colonialism.

Before progressing with my analysis, it is first necessary to note what postcolonial scholars have already said about genocide and how my work relates to these observations. Stone[39] and Rodríguez,[40] particularly, have been unequivocal in attributing the cause of genocidal violence to the exterminatory logics of racism which lie at the heart of colonialism and modernity. Looking specifically at how genocidal violence relates to the depiction of indigenous subjects by colonial discourses, Wilderson[41] argues that colonialism is underpinned by the subject-positions of 'the White' human/settler, 'the Red' savage/half-human and 'the Black' slave/non-human, with genocidal violence and the enslavement of the last two subject-positions by the first crucial to the construction of (white) humanity as a whole. Adopting a slightly more nuanced approach, Wolfe argues that settler colonialism is invariably eliminatory, as it is rooted in the logic of elimination and the replacement of indigenous culture.[42] It is not, Wolfe argues, invariably genocidal, however. This is evidenced by some cultures having been able to accommodate settler colonialism, genocidal violence occurring in non-postcolonial contexts,[43] and the eliminatory logic of settler colonialism being grounded in land acquisition and not race.[44]

Regardless of whether the primary aim of colonialism is the ability to own land or the establishment of civilisational supremacy, the logics which are used to legitimise

36. Andrea Smith, 'Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy: Rethinking Women of Colour Organizing', in *The Color of Violence: Incite Women of Color Against Violence*, ed. INCITE Women of Color Against Violence (Boston: South End Press, 2006), 66.
37. Smith, 'Queer Theory and Native Studies', 51.
38. Ibid., 52.
39. Stone and Moses, *Colonialism and Genocide*.
40. Rodríguez, 'Racial/Colonial Genocide and the 'Neoliberal Academy'.
41. Wilderson, *Red, White & Black Cinema*.
42. Patrick Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native', *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409, 387, https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., 388.

colonial rule rely heavily on racist characterisations of indigenous groups.[45] Furthermore, it is well established that systemic racism establishes the conditions for mass violence and genocidal violence.[46] As such, I contend that even eliminatory rather than explicitly genocidal logics *invariably do have the potential* to inform mass violence against targeted groups. Whilst significant strides have been made towards considering the sexualised power relations which underpin European colonialism/settler colonialism, aside from Smith's aforementioned study of nativist discourses,[47] there is a general lack of literature which directly links heterosexuality to (post)colonial expressions of genocidal violence. This article aims to correct this, drawing partly on established queer analyses of genocide.

The bulk of scholarship which looks at sexuality and genocide has tended to analyse violence against gay men by the Nazis in the Holocaust.[48] Reviewing the genocide studies canon in 2018, Bachman notes that the canon can still be divided into the six key areas that Hinton first identified in 2012;[49] Prototype, Triad, Twentieth-Century Core, Second Circle, Periphery and Forgotten Cases.[50] Whilst diverse in character and location, this evidences a persistent lack of approaches that centrally interrogate how socially constructed norms of gender and sexuality inform genocidal violence. As I have already noted, even explicitly gendered studies of genocide have tended to pursue a categorical and explanatory approach over a deconstructive one.

In recent years there have nonetheless been a few stand-out pieces of critical genocide scholarship that have bucked this trend. In 2010, Spivey and Robinson argued that the emphasis on genocide as mass murder in existing literature hugely restricts our view of genocide, using attempts to destroy LGBT culture to emphasise the need for a renewed focus on social death in genocide studies.[51] Forwarding an explicitly queer approach that

45. For e.g., see James H. Liu and Angela R. Robinson, 'One Ring to Rule Them All: Master Discourses of Enlightenment-and Racism-from Colonial to Contemporary New Zealand', *European Journal of Social Psychology* 46, no. 2 (2015): 137–55. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2141; and Julian Go, '"Racism" and Colonialism: Meanings of Difference and Ruling Practices in America's Pacific Empire'. *Qualitative Sociology* 27, no. 1 (2004): 35–58, https://doi.org/10.1023/b:quas.0000015543.66075.b4
46. Pinar Batur, 'Heart of Violence: Global Racism, War, and Genocide', in *Handbook of the Sociology of Racial and Ethnic Relations*, eds. P. Batur and J. Feagin (Cham: Springer).
47. Smith, 'Queer Theory and Native Studies'.
48. For e.g., see Frank Rector, *The Nazi Extermination of Homosexuals* (New York Stein & Day, 1981); and Louis Crompton and Gay Academic Union, *Gay Genocide: From Leviticus to Hitler* (New York: Gay Academic Union).
49. Alexander Hinton, 'Critical Genocide Studies', *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 7, no. 1 (2012): 4–15. Available at: https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/gsp/vol7/iss1/3/
50. Jeffrey Bachman, 'Cases Studied in Genocide Studies and Prevention and Journal of Genocide Research and Implications for the Field of Genocide Studies', *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 14, no. 1 (2021): 2–20, 6, https://doi.org/10.5038/1911-9933.14.1.1706.
51. Christine M. Robinson and Sue E. Spivey, 'The Politics of Masculinity and the Ex-Gay Movement', *Gender & Society* 21, no. 5 (2007): 650–75, https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243207306384.

looks at the role sexuality plays in 'wider relations of power and normalisation',[52] Matthew Waites undertook a study of genocide in relation to global queer politics in 2018. In this piece, Waites notes the failure of the Genocide Convention to consider groups on the basis of culture or gender, resulting in the exclusion of sexuality,[53] and seeks to redress this. Doing so, he reconfigures the Genocide Convention's target of annihilation from 'national, ethnical, racial or religious group' to 'group. . .defined by the perpetrator'.[54] Exploring this theme, Waites focuses on 'homosexuality' as a target for genocidal violence due to this being the term used in laws in Uganda and The Gambia, but recognises that this is narrow in the demographic it captures.[55] This focus allows Waites to evaluate whether genocide has been perpetrated against 'homosexuals' in the cases of Nazi Germany, The Gambia and Uganda, using the criteria of the Genocide Convention. Finding that it has,[56] Waites evaluates the discursive benefits of using 'genocide' as a label for queer politics.

Waites' work is undoubtedly beneficial in that it uniquely considers the relationship between sexuality and the genocide discourse from an explicitly queer perspective. Furthermore, it is hugely insightful in problematising the heteronormative character of genocide discourses, which draw on visions of the community as an organic collective that necessarily involves heterosexual reproduction.[57] This draws on Lee Edelman's notion of 'reproductive futurism',[58] which refers to an ontological tendency that encapsulates mainstream politics' orientation towards the future, through ideas such as social continuity and progress. Edelman sees this orientation as stemming from the universal construction of 'The Child' as an imagined figure of futurity,[59] arguing that politics is 'the social elaboration of reality' and the self is 'the mere vessel for maintaining the future for the figural Child'.[60] Waites' use of Lee Edelman's notion of reproductive futurism undoubtedly informs my analysis in this article, which sees attempts to limit possibilities for futurity as central to genocidal violence. Where I do question Waites' analysis is in its restriction to the targeting of queer individuals, as this could be read as implying that queer arguments are solely relevant where queer individuals are concerned.

Another piece that adopts an explicitly queer approach to the study of genocide is Lily Nellans' *A Queer(Er) Genocide Studies*.[61] Arguing that queer theory features key concepts that are of value to the study of genocide, Nellans offers queer intellectual curiosity, heteronormativity and reproductive futurism as three frameworks which provide new

52. Melanie Richter-Montpetit, 'Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Sex (in IR) But Were Afraid to Ask: The "Queer Turn" in International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 46, no. 2 (2017): 220–40, 224. https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829817733131.
53. Waites, 'Genocide and Global Queer Politics', 50.
54. Ibid., 52.
55. Ibid., 52.
56. Ibid., 63.
57. Ibid., 66.
58. Edelman, *No Future*, 2.
59. Ibid., 3.
60. Ibid., 30.
61. Nellans, 'A Queer(Er) Genocide Studies'.

insights into queer peoples' experiences of genocide.[62] Specifically, she argues that genocide studies should pay more attention to queer peoples' experiences of genocide, suggests the deployment of heteronormativity as an analytical framework, and uses reproductive futurism to criticise established understandings of genocide that exclude queer lives.[63] Focusing on the latter of these three themes, Nellans argues that 'genocide scholars must be wary of reifying, rather than explaining, perpetrator's behaviour', as a focus on the deaths of future children ignores the experiences and deaths of queer people.[64] This piece is excellent in that it challenges the discipline's focus on heterosexual reproduction as the sole route for reproducing group identity, culture and existence. However, like Waites' article, it does not look at violence against non-queer individuals from a queer perspective.

In this article, I focus on the relevance of queer theory to the study of genocidal violence against individuals who are assumed to be non-queer by the perpetrators of violence. This is in order to highlight the ubiquity of heteronormativity and its relevance to the study of genocide. Seeing heteronormativity as a product of colonialism, I argue that heterosexuality is relevant to genocidal violence against non-queer people as well as violence against queer people. Postcolonial scholars have done well to link genocidal violence to colonialism, either explicitly tying genocide to the racism at the heart of the colonial project[65] or highlighting a more contingent relationship between the two.[66] As I have already argued, even where this relationship is contingent on eliminatory logics and land acquisition,[67] eliminatory logics invariably feature racism, which sets a possible basis for the emergence of mass violence against the subordinated group. Furthermore, queer scholars have shown that heteronormative logics underpin the colonial project, destroying indigenous practices and framing imported institutions such as marriage as a benchmark of civility.[68] Given that genocidal violence is driven by colonialism and colonialism is underpinned by (racist) heteronormativity, it becomes clear that there is a gap in the literature with regards to the heteronormative premises of genocidal violence which targets queers and non-queers alike.

Drawing on Joeden-Forgey's notion of 'life force atrocities',[69] I argue that genocidal violence weaponises heteronormative social bonds (e.g. us/them, parent/child, brother/sister, elder/younger etc.) with the explicit purpose of limiting possibilities for reproduction and futurity.[70] Also drawing partly on insights offered by Waites[71] and Nellans[72], who have noted the centrality of reproductive futurism to genocidal

62. Ibid., 49.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., 63–64.
65. Stone and Moses, *Colonialism and Genocide*; Dylan Rodríguez, 'Racial/Colonial Genocide and the 'Neoliberal Academy', and Wilderson, *Red, White & Black Cinema.*
66. Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native'.
67. Ibid.
68. Taille, *Queering Colonial Natal.*
69. Joeden-Forgey, 'The Devil in the Details'.
70. Edelman, *No Future.*
71. Waites, 'Genocide and Global Queer Politics'.
72. Nellans, 'A Queer(Er) Genocide Studies'.

discourses and violence, I argue that genocidal violence in postcolonial contexts can be characterised as limiting the possibilities of group reproduction. This occurs through a step-by-step process that begins with othering discourses that invoke heteronormative and racist logics of biological essentialism, traceable to the strategies used by European colonisers to legitimise the imposition of colonial rule on indigenous populations.[73] Furthermore, each stage of genocidal violence appeals to heteronormative subject-positions, which govern how the character of violence can be used to maximum destructive effect. All of these factors point towards the existence of genocide as a process as opposed to an event,[74] leaving lasting trauma which obstructs heteronormative group reproduction long after the violence has ended. Furthermore, drawing on Butler's theory of performativity,[75] I argue that genocidal violence constitutes a performative act which gives the heteronormative stereotypes in which it is rooted the appearance of unquestionable facts. It is this theoretical basis that underpins my claim that genocide constitutes a performance of (post) colonial heterosexuality.

Queering Genocide

This section sets out the key themes that emerged in my analysis of the United Nations Human Rights Council's report,[76] informing my assertion that postcolonial genocidal violence depends on logics of heteronormativity. It begins with a short consideration of my sample selection and queer intersectionality. It then provides a very brief context to the Rohingya Genocide before outlining the four subject-positions that have weaponised heteronormative logics to facilitate the emergence, legitimisation, and character of genocidal violence in Myanmar.

In writing this article, I recognise that I am rooting my analysis in a single report of genocidal violence, produced by a global institution. Furthermore, even though this report features extensive interview evidence with members of the community, it would have been preferable to speak directly with Rohingya refugees so as to directly incorporate their voices into the article. Unfortunately, the conduct of interviews was a practical impossibility in this instance. Furthermore, the primary aim of this article is to demonstrate the relevance of heteronormativity to the character of genocidal violence. As such, the Human Rights Council's report[77] represents a suitable document, giving a good overview of the genocide and its emergence with explicitly stated ethical principles based

73. Smith, 'Queer Theory and Native Studies', 51.
74. Sheri P. Rosenberg, 'Genocide Is a Process, Not an Event', *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 7, no. 1 (2012): 16–23, https://doi.org/10.3138/gsp.7.1.16.
75. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), 2.
76. Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*'
77. Ibid.

around a 'reasonable grounds' standard of proof.[78] As such, I made the judgement that it was a suitable source text for this study and set about analysing the report using a Foucauldian understanding of power[79] to uncover heteronormative codes that are woven into the constitution of the document.

Reflecting on the contribution I seek to make to the study of genocide, it is necessary to note that the Rohingya are a religious group, targeted on the basis of religious/ethnic/racial difference,[80] and I am forwarding an argument which primarily draws attention to (hetero)sexuality. I do so not in a manner which sees inequalities as separate, but in the recognition that systems of oppression intersect, overlap, and co-constitute each other. I, therefore, deploy an intersectional style of analysis in this article, drawing partly on approaches that foreground identities located at the standpoint of an intersection, such as 'black woman',[81] but also on queer theory, which radically destabilises ontology and sees all identity categories as discursively constructed. Demonstrating how one may do so, Rahman[82] notes that 'the gay Muslim' constitutes an unintelligible subject position due to the incompatibility of queerness with dominant conceptions of Muslim identity and the incompatibility of being a Muslim with dominant (Western) conceptions of queer identity. Doing so, he highlights that gay Muslims disrupt identity by 'challenging the ontological coherence of these dominant identity narratives',[83] deploying intersectionality in a manner that challenges processes of categorisation. Drawing on this approach, I recognise the obvious importance of categories such as race, religion and ethnicity in the study of genocide, but also that these categories are not immutable and unshifting, instead holding different meanings in different contexts. Indeed, in genocidal contexts, the extent to which discourses of heterosexuality imbue the meaning of these categories is something that has gone unnoticed thus far and needs to be studied. It is in this vein my argument progresses, outlining the ways in which the genocide in Myanmar depended on the discursive construction of heteronormative subject-positions, whilst reaffirming these subject-positions through its performance. Before doing so, I provide a brief historical context to the Rohingya Genocide.

In 2008, after decades of military dictatorship, a new constitution was introduced in Myanmar. Whilst hailed as a triumph for democracy, this saw the military retaining complete control over the entire state security apparatus, exemption from civilian oversight, at least one of two Vice-Presidential posts and 25 percent of seats in the legislature, giving them the ability to veto constitutional amendments.[84] In 2015, however, the National League for Democracy, headed by Aung San Suu Kyi, won the election and took office

78. Ibid., 4.
79. See Michel Foucault, trans. Robert Hurley, *The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1, An Introduction* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976 [1990]), 94–5.
80. Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*', 5.
81. Ibid.
82. Momin Rahman, 'Queer as Intersectionality: Theorizing Gay Muslim Identities', *Sociology* 44, no. 5 (2010): 944–61, https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038510375733.
83. Ibid., 952.
84. Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*', 4.

on 31 March 2016.[85] Due to this, international sanctions were lifted and foreign investment in Myanmar was welcomed. Despite this apparent advancement of democracy in Myanmar, the longstanding oppression of the Rohingya and other ethnic minorities by the Tatmadaw[86] continued.

This violence has now occurred on such a scale that there is barely any trace of previously existing Rohingya communities in Rakhine State. Now, the majority of surviving Rohingya live in cramped refugee camps in Bangladesh, with their native settlements destroyed by the military.[87] Despite the desires of Rohingya refugees to return to their homeland, the continued denial of formal citizenship rights, the imposition of a racist 'Bengali ID card' system and the lack of guarantees for their safety leaves them fearful to return.[88] Exploring the way in which such oppressions have operated on the basis of heteronormative logics, the codes listed in this section set out the heteronormative subject-positions that have enabled genocidal violence in Myanmar. This analysis draws attention to the Tatmadaw as a genocidal institution with a history of using methodical violence. This takes on an even more pressing urgency in light of the recent military coup, which has once again ended democratic government and has seen members of the police and army murdering pro-democracy protestors indiscriminately.[89]

'The Outsider'

For the genocide to occur, it was first necessary to portray the Rohingya as 'other' to the rest of the Burmese body-politic. This was done through reference to discourses of biological essentialism,[90] portraying the Rohingya as inherently disposed to inferiority due to bodily differences. This othering was also underpinned by the notion of 'reproductive futurism',[91] evidenced by the cross-generational persistence of biologically essentialist discourses. The Tatmadaw's argument here is that not only living Rohingya, but their children and their children's children are fundamentally flawed as human beings, rendering any possibility of inclusion to Burmese society unthinkable. This exclusion

85. Ibid.
86. The Tatmadaw is the official name for the Burmese military.
87. R. Wright, M. Rivers, and M. Phillips, 'Return to Rakhine: "Genocide Never Happened in This Country"', Genocide Watch, June 10, 2019. Available at: http://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/2018/10/19/Return-to-Rakhine-Genocide-never-happened-in-this-country.
88. Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*', 11.
89. Joshua Cheetham, 'Myanmar Coup: The "Battle Tactics" Used in Crackdowns on Protests'. *BBC News*, March 12, 2021, sec. Asia. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-56373463.
90. Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*', 5.
91. Edelman, *No Future*, 2.

established the primary discursive condition for genocidal violence to occur, creating the epistemic basis that successive waves of genocidal violence would depend on.

Under military rule in Myanmar, the lack of a collective national identity has led to the Tatmadaw crafting an alternative state identity that allows for multiple ethnic groups to co-exist. In her canonical article *Political Identities/Nationalism as Heterosexism*,[92] Spike Peterson explained how the nation state's treatment of women as biological reproducers of group members and signifiers of group identities, amongst other functions, evidence the heterosexist character of nationalism. The same kind of themes emerge from the 'national races' discourse that is promoted by the Tatmadaw; a list of the eight major ethnic groups and the further 135 smaller 'races' who are perceived to 'belong' in Myanmar.[93] Others, such as the Rohingya, are perceived to be 'outsiders', with this logic rendered intelligible through exclusionary language and imagery such as; 'Despite living among peacocks, crows cannot become peacocks'.[94] Such discourses are similar to those historically used to oppress women, orienting around the idea that regardless of social behaviour, one group is inherently disposed to inferiority to another due to their biological characteristics. An example of this is Freud's infamous statement that 'anatomy is destiny',[95] promoting the idea that personality is a natural extension of 'biological sex'. Moreover, Foucault notes that medicalised discourses of perversion have historically constructed the subject-position of 'the homosexual',[96] indicating that discourses of biological essentialism have also been used to portray men who have sex with men as inferior. Finally, and possibly most relevantly, these discourses of biological essentialism have an intertextuality with anti-Muslim racism globally. In the UK, for example, Muslims have been constructed by the media as culturally 'other' and 'un-British',[97] with this othering underpinned by Orientalist discourses that portray people of colour as inherently less civilised.[98] That discourses of biological essentialism underpin depictions of gendered, sexualised and racialised difference is significant and reflects Western thought's historical tendency to explain social differences such as gender, race, or class as symptoms of 'scientific/biological difference', 'expressed as degeneration'.[99]

92. Spike V. Peterson, 'Political Identities/Nationalism as Heterosexism'. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 1, no. 1 (1999): 34–65. https://doi.org/10.1080/146167499360031.
93. Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*', 5.
94. Ibid.
95. Sigmund Freud, *Collected Papers. Vol. 2* (London: Hogarth Press, 1997), 274.
96. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 43.
97. Amir Saeed, 'Media, Racism and Islamophobia: The Representation of Islam and Muslims in the Media', *Sociology Compass* 1, no. 2 (2007): 443–62, 444, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2007.00039.x.
98. Ibid., 447.
99. Oyeronke Oyewumi, *African Gender Studies: Theoretical Questions and Conceptual Issues* (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

Moving well beyond a linguistic designation of difference, such logics have had a real and detrimental impact on the lived experiences of the Rohingya over recent decades. Most significantly, the Rohingya have been denied formal citizenship rights, rendering most of this group 'de facto stateless'.[100] This refusal to acknowledge the personhood of Rohingya individuals has come alongside a host of restrictions in the group's access to the public sphere, rendering the notion that the Rohingya lack in agency a self-fulfilling prophecy. For example, they have been barred from enrolling at Sittwe University since 2012,[101] have been subjected to a discriminatory travel authorisation system[102] and have had the franchise removed in the 2015 general election,[103] the election which ironically saw international sanctions lifted due to the perceived advancement of democracy. Such oppressions have even extended beyond public rights and into private life, with restrictions on the number and spacing of children, on birth registration and access to marriage.[104] These othering discourses evidence an attempt to slowly differentiate this group from others, as they become defined by lower levels of education, increasing levels of poverty and an inability to mix with other groups due to travel restrictions.

This difference was then made intelligible by discourses of biological essentialism, which rooted perceived differences in immutable characteristics. Most significant here, however, are procreative restrictions. These represent a clear attempt to impede heteronormative group reproduction in a discursive context where group reproduction is understood in terms of having children.[105] This was unquestionably front and centre in the minds of the Tatmadaw in both the beginning and the continuation of the genocidal enterprise, as I will continue to explore.

The extent to which the othering of the Rohingya was underpinned by an understanding of reproductive futurism[106] is evidenced by the cross-generational persistence of discourses of biological essentialism. The 'national races' discourse,[107] in which the inferiority of the Rohingya is rooted, has remained in-place since the Ne Win dictatorship of the 1960s.[108] The immutability of this system of logic points towards an attempt to maintain the distinction between 'us' and 'them' over multiple generations. Key here is the notion that not only 'they', but also 'their children' will be in possession of undesirable characteristics. As the narrative goes, in order to protect 'us' and 'our children', 'we' must establish a permanent group distinction to maintain 'our' racial purity. Such notions of racial purity can themselves be traced back to the bio-political introduction of rigid ethnic/racial/religious/cultural processes of categorisation under the British rule of colonial Burma,[109] evidencing a racist genealogy of oppression rooted in the discursive construction of 'biologically inferior' group characteristics.

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100. Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*', 6.
101. Ibid., 7.
102. Ibid., 6.
103. Ibid., 8.
104. Ibid., 6.
105. Edelman, *No Future*, 3.
106. Ibid., 2.
107. Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*', 5.
108. Ibid., 6.
109. Michael W. Charney, *A History of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 8.

An explanation for the routine deployment of such logics over the last half a century in Myanmar comes from the unstable position of the Tatmadaw within society. In the face of pro-democracy movements in recent years, the military has had to justify its extensive role in political life. Doing so, it has used the 'Rohingya crisis' to 'reaffirm itself as the protector of a nation under threat',[110] portraying itself as an arbiter in inter-ethnic conflicts. In reality, the bulk of the violence against ethnic minorities has been the result of deliberate Tatmadaw campaigns, as will be explored in the next section. Nonetheless, this narrative has enabled the Tatmadaw to portray itself as a paternalistic agent with the best interests of Myanmar, defined narrowly, at heart. This is symptomatic of what Foucault terms 'discourse battle'.[111] Rather than simply reflecting an already existing social reality, discourse is a force of its own that brings about effects.[112] In this instance, racist biological essentialism resulted in the wholesale exclusion of the Rohingya from Myanmar's civil society, establishing the discursive terrain for the genocide to occur in.

Consequently, it is clear that the discursive basis of genocidal violence in Myanmar was established through reference to notions of biological essentialism. Through the continued application of colonial discourses of racial difference, the Tatmadaw have been able to root their denial of rights to the Rohingya in what are portrayed as biological facts. This denial had the impact of separating the Rohingya from the broader body-politic, as well as beginning to impede the group's capacity to reproduce. In a context underpinned by reproductive futurism, procreative restrictions represented the first step in the ultimate goal of the Tatmadaw: to prevent the group from successfully reproducing in line with dominant heteronormative logics. The extent to which these logics informed the subsequent genocidal enterprise is evidenced by the cross-generational persistence of biologically essentialist discourses, which have been (re)iterated by the Tatmadaw as the basis of Burmese society since the 1960s.

'The Deviant'

In the lead-up to the genocide, the Tatmadaw engaged in a concerted effort to portray the Rohingya as an existential threat to Myanmar as a state. This occurred largely through the use of racialised and sexualised language, which painted the Rohingya as deviant subjects and constructed a discursive environment in which the commencement of genocidal violence was made intelligible amongst the remainder of the population. Looking at the discursive construction of threats to state security, Ole Waever conceives of security as a speech-act in which something is proclaimed to be an existential threat to the collective, legitimising extraordinary action to counter this threat.[113] As such, he conceives of security as relating to the utterance of the word itself. This notion is of great importance when interrogating the construction of the Rohingya as a threat to Myanmar

110. Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*', 5.
111. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 123.
112. Ibid.
113. Ole Waever, 'Securitisation and De-Securitisation', in *On Security*, Ronnie D. Lipschutz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 46–86, 56–7.

as a state by the Tatmadaw. The clearest example of a securitising discourse being used against the Rohingya is in a Facebook post by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, on 2 September 2018. Here, he stated;

> The Bengali problem was a long-standing one which has become an unfinished job despite the efforts of the previous governments to solve it. The government in office is taking great care in solving the problem.[114]

This post was written at the height of military operations against Rohingya communities and deploys dehumanising language, using 'Bengali problem' to signify 'Rohingya' and 'unfinished job' to presumably refer to group destruction/displacement, taken in the context of military operations. Furthermore, this statement's significance becomes even more apparent given that it is seen as holding the key to proving the Tatmadaw's genocidal intent to destroy the Rohingya by the Human Rights Council.[115] This declaration of genocide was impossible to do when looking at violence committed against other ethnic groups, due to there being a lack of proof with regards to the intent of such violence. Taking this inquiry one step further, it is necessary to explore the discourses which were deployed to construct 'The Bengali problem' within the popular imaginary.

In 2012, in the context of the 'systemic oppression and persecution of the Rohingya'[116] intergroup violence emerged in Rakhine State, with the murder and alleged rape of Rakhine women and the killing of ten Muslim pilgrims frequently seen as key triggers.[117] Whilst some of the violence was at the hands of Rakhine Buddhists, the Tatmadaw stoked, facilitated, encouraged, and perpetrated violence against the Rohingya.[118] This emergence of widescale violence against the Rohingya in 2012 was the first clear hallmark that a discursive context for genocidal violence to occur was being created. In this context, local political parties, radical Buddhist monks, and local officials engaged in the spreading of anti-Rohingya rhetoric, labelling the Rohingya as an existential threat that might 'swallow other races' with their 'incontrollable birth rates'.[119] Such language invokes imagery of social deviants, perceived to be parasitic to the body-politic due to their defiance of reproductive norms. The use of birth rates in the construction of threat to the collective is of particular interest here, given that this claim seems to be baseless: the Rohingya had their ability to have children severely restricted for a number of years.[120]

Looking at discussions of population in discourses of sustainable development, Emma Foster argues that by defining population as a problem, they deploy 'questionable neo-Malthusian hypotheses, based on the assumption that too many people results in human suffering', with the proposed solution being the disciplining of one's

114. Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*', 11.
115. Ibid., 16.
116. Ibid., 6.
117. Ibid., 7.
118. Ibid.
119. Ibid.
120. Ibid., 6.

sexual conduct.[121] Whilst sustainable development discourses largely encourage subjects to self-discipline, those deployed against the Rohingya speak about them rather than to them. They imply that this group is incapable of following established social norms surrounding procreation and that their breeding must be curtailed or else an impending disaster will occur. In relation to the norms of reproductive futurism, the assertion that the Rohingya will 'swallow other races'[122] clearly constructs a threat to 'our children' by their irresponsible breeding. The logic follows that if the Rohingya cannot breed in a sustainable manner, they jeopardise the futures of our children, who figure as the literal continuation of our subjectivity.[123] Given that the Rohingya had already been depicted as racially inferior by the Tatmadaw, this established an imperative for action to be taken to correct the situation. As such, the invocation of reproductive norms was once again crucial in turning up the pressure against the Rohingya, establishing the conditions for violence to emerge.

Alongside notions of unsustainable reproduction, racist slurs that labelled the Rohingya terrorists and illegal immigrants were routinely deployed, despite these allegations being baseless.[124] These labels have great significance for this article due to the heteronormative meanings attached to them. Discussing the subject-positions of the unwanted immigrant and the terrorist in IR, Cynthia Weber argues that they represent expressions of the perverse homosexual, figuring as racially darkened representations of 'the underdeveloped' and 'the undevelopable', respectively.[125] The former figures as underdeveloped due to them perverting 'natural' processes of national/sexual neoliberal development in emigrating to a more developed country, cemented by accusations of them breeding out of control once there.[126] The latter of these two subject-positions figures as undevelopable due to them being dangerously un-reproductive and incapable of becoming civilised,[127] with Al Qaeda terrorists framed as willing to die in order to destroy the Western homeland, on the wishes of their God.[128] As such, both are rendered perverse due to their defiance of productive heterosexual norms of development, also known as chrononormativity.[129] Similarly, Puar notes that 'the terrorist' is a subject position laden with sexualised understandings.[130] This is because 'the invocation of the terrorist as a

121. Emma A. Foster, 'Sustainable Development: Problematising Normative Constructions of Gender within Global Environmental Governmentality', *Globalizations* 8, no. 2 (2011): 135–49, 144–5, https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2010.493013.
122. Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*', 7.
123. Edelman, *No Future*, 30.
124. Ibid.
125. Cynthia Weber, *Queer International Relations Sovereignty, Sexuality and the Will to Knowledge* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 48.
126. Ibid., 87–90.
127. Ibid., 195.
128. Ibid., 98.
129. Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 3.
130. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 37.

queer, non-national, perversely racialized other has become part of the normative script of the US war on terror',[131] evidenced by widespread imagery of Osama bin Laden being sodomised by weapons, for example. The thick meanings of racism and sexual perversion associated with the subject-position of 'the terrorist' rendered it crucial to the emergence of the Tatmadaw's genocidal campaign against the Rohingya.

Depicting ethnic conflict as a threat to regional stability, the Tatmadaw was able to impose a state of emergency on 10 June 2012, with this lasting until March 2016.[132] This period saw an enhanced security presence, restrictions on public gatherings, heightened mistrust between ethnic minorities, the Tatmadaw using violence indiscriminately against the Rohingya, and the displacement of more than 140,000 people.[133] Building on the systematic oppression of the Rohingya since 2012, 25 August 2017 marked a turning point in Rakhine State due to the initiation of genocidal 'clearance operations'.[134] In the early hours of the morning on 25 August, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA)[135] launched a series of attacks on military bases, with the goal of attracting global attention to the oppression of the Rohingya. Here, a small number of 'minimally-trained leaders' had limited arms and some individuals had improvised explosive devices, but most were untrained villagers who made do with 'sticks and knives'.[136] Whilst the attack killed twelve security personnel, the security services' response to what they called the 'terrorist threat' was 'immediate, brutal and grossly disproportionate', victimising the entire Rohingya population.[137] This clearly demonstrates the language of security being strategically deployed to create mass insecurity for a sector of the population. It is also consistent with a post-9/11 discursive landscape, featuring the routine invocation of the label 'terrorism' by states to legitimise the overwhelming use of force against non-state actors, such as the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, or Hamas in Palestine.[138] The specific forms of violence which resulted in the displacement of almost 750,000 Rohingya by mid-August 2018[139] will be explored in the following sections, but here I wish to draw attention to the specific discourse which associates the Rohingya with terrorism. Given that 'the terrorist' discourse was frequently deployed alongside claims that the Rohingya are overly-libidinous,[140] there is a clear intertextuality between discourses used in Myanmar and racist discourses which are used to legitimise the use of force against civilians globally.[141]

131. Ibid., 37.
132. Ibid., 7.
133. Ibid.
134. Ibid., 8.
135. The 'ARSA' is a small armed group with the aim of defending the Rohingya from Tatmadaw oppression through the use of force.
136. Ibid.
137. Ibid., 8.
138. Michael Toomey and Benedict E. Singleton, 'The Post-9/11 "Terrorism" Discourse and Its Impact on Nonstate Actors: A Comparative Study of the LTTE and Hamas', *Asian Politics & Policy* 6, no. 2 (2014): 183–98, https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12110.
139. Ibid.
140. Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*', 7.
141. Weber, *Queer International Relations*, 48.

Unpacking what the Tatmadaw mean by the 'the Bengali problem',[142] it seems to figure as the deviant but incoherent subject position of the overly-libidinous, illegal immigrant, terrorist. In the case of the Rohingya, this is a group which has been subjected to procreative restrictions for a number of years, has a long history of living inside Burma/Myanmar, and is not synonymous with the ARSA, contrary to Tatmadaw implications. As the Tatmadaw's representation of the Rohingya is baseless, it is evident that the discursive labour which went into the construction of the Rohingya as a racialised and sexualised threat was pivotal. This is testament to Rahman's argument that the interrogation of identity categories with queer methods can expose these identities to be ontologically incoherent.[143] By linking the Rohingya to figures defined by a defiance of chrononormative temporality, the Tatmadaw was able to associate the Rohingya with perversions such as breeding out of control, attempting to bypass natural processes of development, and a commitment to using violence in the pursuit of non-worldly goals.[144] As in many conflicts, the invocation of the subject-position of 'the terrorist' was particularly crucial to the emergence of violence, as this figure implies that the group in question are beyond reasoning with. Consequently, by framing the Rohingya as perverting the future of the nation on plural counts, the Tatmadaw was able to legitimise the emergence of genocidal violence in 2017.

'The Female Carer and the Male Protector'

Alongside the construction of the Rohingya as a threat through the use of racialised and sexualised discourses, the structure and form of genocidal violence in Myanmar also invoked logics of heterosexuality. Attacking the private sphere in a manner that maximised group trauma represented a clear attempt to destabilise the ontological basis of the community. Furthermore, gender stereotypes that construct women as caregivers and men as protectors resulted in multiple instances in which men were killed through primary lethal violence, whilst women, children and the elderly were either killed through subsequent sexual/structural violence or were left to live. This points towards non-sexual genocidal violence being rooted in heteronormative stereotypes, as well as preventing future heteronormative reproduction due to the emotional centres of the community being destroyed and an absence of males.

A key method through which the Tatmadaw attempted to destroy cohesion amongst the groups it targeted was in the timing and form of its acts of genocidal violence. Here, there was a specific focus on the private sphere as a target of attack, drawing on the gendered division of space that is the public/private divide and rapidly transforming this realm of domesticity and care to one of death, destruction and mass panic. This process began in 2016, with the removal of protective fences around Rohingya households and the confiscation of knives and sharp implements.[145] Building on the subsequent inability

142. Ibid., 8.
143. Rahman, 'Queer as Intersectionality', 952.
144. Weber, *Queer International Relations*, 98.
145. Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*', 10.

of Rohingya households to protect themselves, the period between 2016 and 2017 saw an increase in house searches, beatings and thefts.[146] Such acts rapidly transformed spaces of safety into ones of anxiety and vulnerability, but were, unfortunately, a harbinger of worse things to come. With the commencement of 'clearance operations' in August 2017, communities were routinely attacked in the early hours of the morning in operations 'designed to instil immediate terror'.[147] Describing the sheer horror of such attacks, the Human Rights Council state;

> [people were] . . .woken by intense rapid weapon fire, explosions, or the shouts and screams of villagers. Structures were set ablaze and Tatmadaw soldiers fired their guns indiscriminately into houses, fields, and at villagers.[148]

Crucial in this statement is that the Tatmadaw not only attacked villages and households but that they did so in a manner that maximised group trauma. This motive is further evidenced by large numbers of children, the elderly, and disabled people being burned to death in their own homes, with some forced into and/or locked in buildings that were set on fire.[149] Such atrocities represent the weaponisation of this sphere of domestic care, with lethal consequences. Furthermore, once Rohingya villages had been fled, the Tatmadaw wasted no time in bulldozing settlements, 'erasing every trace of the Rohingya communities, while also destroying criminal evidence'.[150] This pattern of violence against minority communities was also replicated in Kachin and Shan States, where systematic attacks on civilian targets, indiscriminate shooting, and the looting, burning and destruction of homes was also commonplace.[151]

The routine deployment of such tactics against the private sphere of community life indicate a concerted effort to destroy the homes of ethnic minorities; acts which Porteous and Smith label 'domicide'.[152] When considering the destruction of homes, it is important to note that they are more than just bricks and mortar, but are also imaginative and emotional centres,[153] entailing familial bonds, friendships and a sense of community, for example. It is these factors that are generative of what Somerville terms 'ontological security',[154] referring to a feeling of rootedness in one's home, and a subsequent sense of belonging in the world.[155] It was in the attempt to destabilise such feelings that the

146. Ibid.
147. Ibid., 8.
148. Ibid.
149. Ibid., 9.
150. Ibid., 11.
151. Ibid., 12.
152. Douglas Porteous and Sandra Smith, *Domicide: The Global Destruction of Home* (Montréal; London: Mcgill-Queen's University Press, 2002).
153. Andrew Gorman-Murray, Scott McKinnon, and Dale Dominey-Howes, 'Queer Domicide', *Home Cultures* 11, no. 2 (2014): 237–61, https://doi.org/10.2752/175174214x13891916944751.
154. Peter Somerville, 'Homelessness and the Meaning of Home: Rooflessness or Rootlessness?', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 16, no. 4 (1992): 529–39, 533, 535–36, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.1992.tb00194.x.
155. Ibid., 535–6.

Tatmadaw deployed shock tactics in its attacks on the private sphere, inducing a rapid transition from a realm of comfort/domesticity to one of death/destruction. As noted, this was followed by a complete physical eradication of deserted homes and villages, completing the process of domicidal destruction.

Another way in which gender stereotypes informed the character of the genocide in Myanmar was through the structuring of genocidal violence according to binary identity categories. Whilst there were multiple recorded instances of the Tatmadaw deploying violence indiscriminately against the groups it targeted,[156] there were also multiple cases of gendered stereotypes governing the specific form of violence. The first broad stereotype that informed the character of genocidal violence was that of men being protectors in the community. This initially became apparent as the Tatmadaw recruited men from other ethnic groups in Rakhine State to partake in the violence against the Rohingya. With Rakhine men attacking the Rohingya with bladed weapons[157] and participating in Tatmadaw operations by looting, burning and killing the Rohingya,[158] the Tatmadaw was able to paint itself as an arbiter rather than an instigator of ethnic conflict.

In conjunction with recruiting men to partake in genocidal violence, the Tatmadaw also organised its attacks according to stereotypes of men as protectors. This resulted in the primary targeting of men considered to be of 'fighting age',[159] or those known to be educated or influential in communities,[160] due to perceptions that they would be the most likely to instigate a resistance movement. Due to such stereotypes, the emergence of what Jones terms a 'root and branch' model of violence[161] became apparent throughout the genocide. This was due to the primary 'rounding up' and disappearance of men and boys, and the subsequent killing or injuring of women and girls through sexual or structural violence.[162,163] The killing of fighting-age men also results in the killing of men who are likely to father children. This not only speaks to stereotypes of fathers as protectors, it also makes subsequent heteronormative group reproduction extremely difficult. With monogamous marriage the norm in Myanmar, the routine deployment of lethal violence against men prevented many Rohingya families from having any more children. The fact that women were less likely to be killed, and their deaths often being a secondary outcome of sexual violence or neglect, is also significant. This is because it frames women as disposable; if they died, this was a by-product of sexual violence or rape. In the more common instances that they lived, they were scarred by this experience, further impeding group reproduction as I explore in the next section.

156. For e.g., see Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*', 7, 9.
157. Ibid., 9.
158. Ibid., 11.
159. Ibid., 12.
160. Ibid., 10.
161. Jones, 'Gendercide and Genocide', 193.
162. Structural violence is a term coined by Johan Galtung to refer to instances in which a social structure/institution harms people by denying them of their basic needs (i.e., food, water, healthcare etc.) See Johan Galtung, 'Violence, Peace, and Peace Research', *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 167–91, 170–3, https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336900600301
163. See Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*' (UN Human Rights Council, September 2018), 8, 9, 10.

Whilst the aforementioned acts of genocidal violence are unthinkable to most, it is by looking at exceptional consequences of gendered stereotypes that we can gain insights into the operation of power[164] and the character of heterosexuality: an episteme underpinned by gender stereotypes such as male protector/female carer. These stereotypes, mapping onto notions of public/private, proved to be hugely significant in the conduct of genocidal violence in Myanmar. In the first instance, the manner in which the Tatmadaw attacked homes using shock tactics represented a clear attempt to destabilise the ontological centre of the communal lives of the Rohingya. Following the traumatic instigation of violence and forced displacement of the Rohingya from their villages came the rapid bulldozing of their villages. Through this two-step process, the Tatmadaw both marred communal relationships and destroyed the physical spaces in which community bonds existed, discouraging the Rohingya from returning to their homes. Furthermore, again weaponising masculinity by encouraging men from other communities to commit violence against the Rohingya, the Tatmadaw was able to legitimise its continued presence in the area, prolonging the genocidal campaign. The primary killing of fighting-age males represents a clear attempt to prevent the future reproduction of the community on a practical level, leaving an imbalance between the number of men and women in the wake of the genocide.

'The Rape Victim'

Another way in which genocidal violence perpetrated by the Tatmadaw drew on heterosexual logics was through the use of sexual violence to establish a power binary between the attacker and the victim.[165] This is evidenced by the use of rape and sexual violence as an act of feminisation/homosexualisation, and by the dehumanising contexts/rituals involved in acts of sexual violence. Such factors point towards the Tatmadaw systematically using sexual violence to affirm their status as omnipotent agents within Burmese society, whilst simultaneously designating the victims of sexual violence as lacking in agency and destroying the targeted community's association with sexual intercourse.

The use of sexual violence across genocidal contexts is systematic and pervasive, as was noted by Mackinnon in her successful attempt to get rape recognised as a genocidal act in the wake of the Bosnian and Rwandan Genocides.[166] Such acts tend to be perpetrated by male aggressors against female victims, and often speak to broader social norms in which rape/sexual violence is used by the aggressor to display physical dominance and control. The extent to which this norm remains the status quo in Myanmar is evidenced by the fact that marital rape remains legal here, with a long-standing bill

164. Lisa Downing, *The Subject of Murder: Gender, Exceptionality, and the Modern Killer* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).

165. Here I use the term 'victim' to refer to the subject-position associated with meanings of disempowerment that genocidal violence depends upon, as opposed to in a way which demeans survivors of rape and/or sexual violence.

166. Catherine Mackinnon, 'Rape, Genocide, and Women's Human Rights',

aiming at changing this still not passed.[167] This points towards the continued existence of marriage as an institution in which men hold the ability to make all decisions, including when to have sex, regardless of the woman's will.

The use of genocidal rape by the Tatmadaw to further weaponise such norms, establishing the victim as lacking in agency and the attacker as the 'decision maker', is evidenced by the use of sexual violence against men in the genocide. During the genocide, the Human Rights Council noted that there were credible reports of men and boys 'being subjected to rape, genital mutilation, and sexualized torture'.[168] They further note that such acts were often deployed 'to obtain information or confessions'.[169] In discussing sexual violence against men, and indeed broader violence(s), the report fails to mention the sexuality of any of the victims of genocide. This is notable, as presumably there were queer members of the Rohingya community who were also targeted. The report's lack of mention of sexuality could be due to people not wishing to disclose their sexuality due to associated risks, or it could have been due to it failing to consider sexuality to be relevant. This ambiguity is something that needs to be addressed through explicit references to sexuality in future Human Rights Council reports. Nonetheless, what is interesting in this report is that sexual violence is discussed as a tool through which the Tatmadaw increased their control over victims of sexual violence, but that their heterosexual status is not brought into question. This is indicative of broader trends in sexual violence across genocidal contexts, in which men are raped as an act of feminisation/homosexualisation, whilst the perpetrator's masculine status is bolstered.[170]

The systematic use of such acts against men in genocidal contexts speaks to the existence of rape/sexual violence as an act that is used by perpetrators to establish victims as their subordinate, lacking in agency. Whilst such norms stem from heteronormative institutions such as marriage, this renders them even more potent when deployed by men against men. This is a testament to Shepherd's statement that 'the boundaries between gender identities are often regulated through violence',[171] with sexual violence (re) inscribing identity categories rooted in heteronormative logics. This is because the victims are not only exposed to the trauma of being raped/sexually violated, but also to the added weight of gendered social norms in which sexual violence signifies feminisation.

Alongside the use of sexual violence against men, the depraved rituals that often surrounded the rape of women in Myanmar also point towards the use of sexual violence to establish a power binary between the rapist and the victim. Discussing such rituals,

167. Aviva Stahl, 'Myanmar May Finally Pass Legislation to Criminalize Domestic Violence and Marital Rape – Women's Media Center', *Womens Media Center*, December 31, 2018. Available at: http://www.womensmediacenter.com/news-features/myanmar-may-finally-pass-legislation-to-criminalize-domestic-violence-and-marital-rape.
168. Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*', 9.
169. Ibid., 12.
170. Ferrales, Nyseth Brehm, and Mcelrath, 'Gender-Based Violence Against Men and Boys in Darfur', 574.
171. Laura J. Shepherd, *Gender, Violence and Popular Culture: Telling Stories* (London: Routledge, 2013), 6.

Joeden-Forgey notes that the bodies of victims are treated contemptuously as a representation of the community at large;

> The elaborate rape rituals and ritual rape spaces that perpetrators create are potent symbolic spaces in which to enact the annihilation of a people. . .exploiting the symbols and relationships available to them to intentionally exert maximum damage to the woman or girl, to the community, to the group's regenerative capacity, and perhaps even to its invisible spirit.[172]

Examples of rape rituals that treat the bodies of victims in such a manner are plentiful when looking at genocidal rape in Myanmar. The Human Rights Council note, for example, that rapes 'were accompanied by derogatory language and threats to life, such as, "We are going to kill you this way, by raping you"'.[173] Furthermore, women were often raped by multiple men, with one survivor remarking "I was lucky, I was only raped by three men".[174] In conjunction with acts of rape being multiple and accompanied by dehumanising rhetoric, they were also accompanied by overwhelming acts of physical violence. Most rape victims were scarred by injuries, such as deep bite marks, and many died of their injuries, including those inflicted by the use of knives and sticks to rape.[175]

Alongside the maximisation of individual physical/emotional trauma, these acts often occurred in public spaces, with groups of up to 40 women being gang-raped in front of their community, friends and family members.[176] Due to this, women who survived the ordeal of rape often face a huge amount of stigma and discrimination within their communities; a common feature of post-genocidal societies.[177] This stigmatisation of genocide survivors by the communities they previously depended on for support is just one symptom of the enduring and all-encompassing damage that genocidal sexual violence/rape has on targeted populations. Summarising the routine use of sexual violence by the Tatmadaw over the last three decades, the Human Rights Council note that rape/gang rape/sexual slavery/forced nudity/sexual humiliation/mutilation/sexual assault have been deployed as 'a deliberate strategy to intimidate, terrorize or punish a civilian population', and that this amounts to 'a tactic of war'.[178] As a result, by looking at where and how acts of sexual violence occurred throughout the genocide, it becomes clear they were primarily deployed as an attempt to demean, degrade and destroy social bonds amongst targeted populations: a characteristic of genocide initially noted by Joeden-Forgey in her work on 'life-force atrocities'.[179] The use of sexual violence to attempt to strip victims of agency and to destroy social cohesion also gains meaning through its deliberate disruption of existing heteronormative logics.

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172. Joeden-Forgery, 'Gender and the Future of Genocide Studies and Prevention, 93.
173. Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*', 9.
174. Ibid.
175. Ibid.
176. Ibid.
177. Smith, 'Women and Genocide: Notes on an Unwritten History'.
178. Ibid., 15.
179. Joeden-Forgey, 'The Devil in the Details'.

Within heteronormative logics, sexual intercourse constitutes an act of intimacy and pleasure between a man and a woman in a monogamous relationship, forming the social nexus of heterosexual reproduction. Acts of rape and sexual violence invert these logics by violently stripping the victim of agency in acts of symbolic feminisation/homosexualisation,[180] in a context where this is associated with weakness. Furthermore, where these acts are public and particularly violent or lethal, they desecrate the community's association of sexual intercourse with intimacy. As such, the individuals who are raped and the community's association with sexual intercourse are simultaneously targeted in instances of genocidal rape. Those directly targeted subsequently associate sexual intimacy with emotions of shame and memories of trauma. Furthermore, heteronormative social bonds in the community at large are targeted by rape rituals that force family members to watch their kin violently, publicly, and aggressively assaulted. Consequently, sexual violence is the clearest way in which genocidal violence attempts to destroy the future reproductive capacity of targeted populations, as it weaponises the act of sex itself. Rather than being an expression of love and intimacy; meanings that are traditionally bound to heteronormative sex, sex becomes directly associated with the genocidal targeting and symbolic victimisation of the community.

Cumulatively, through the weaponisation of heteronormative logics in the initial othering of the Rohingya and in the subsequent organisation of genocidal violence, the future reproductive possibilities for the group were incrementally limited by the Tatmadaw. This has amounted to the situation today where the Rohingya's emotional and physical homes have been destroyed, most Rohingya live in cramped refugee camps in Bangladesh, a significant proportion of the male members of the community are dead and a large number of women, especially, are scarred by abhorrent acts of sexual violence. In this sense, it is difficult to see the genocide as anything other than a deliberate series of attacks on the heteronormative social bonds that hold/held this group together. Furthermore, given that heteronormativity can be traced back to colonial rule,[181] and the well-established relationship between colonialism and genocidal violence,[182] I argue that this trend is applicable across postcolonial contexts in which social relations can be characterised by heteronormativity. As such, genocide can be interpreted as an expression of (post)colonial heterosexuality.

Genocidal Violence as a Performance of Heterosexuality

This section builds on the argument that postcolonial genocidal violence is based around a step-by-step process in which the targeted group's reproductive possibilities are limited. Taking this argument one step further, it argues that postcolonial genocidal violence constitutes a performative act through which the stereotypes underpinning these

180. Ferrales, Nyseth Brehm, and Mcelrath, 'Gender-Based Violence Against Men and Boys in Darfur', 574.

181. See Tallie, *Queering Colonial Natal*; Finley, 'Decolonizing the Queer Native Body; and Smith, 'Queer Theory and Native Studies'.

182. See Stone and Moses, *Colonialism and Genocide*; Wilderson, *Red, White & Black Cinema;* and Rodríguez, 'Racial/Colonial Genocide and the "Neoliberal Academy"'.

newly-founded reproductive impossibilities are reinforced and given the appearance of facts. This argument draws on Butler's theory of performativity[183] and Nyseth Brehm et al.'s gender-genocide nexus, which argues that genocidal violence is a performance of masculinity.[184] In the Rohingya Genocide, this occurred in four specific ways, as detailed below:

1) By using the image of 'The Outsider' to legitimise the restrictions to the Rohingya's civil liberties, this group increasingly vanished from public life. This gave credence to the idea that they are not 'one of us', giving the 'national races' discourse[185] the appearance of an immutable fact through decreasing levels of interaction between the Rohingya and other ethnic groups. Furthermore, this subject-position enabled the initial imposition of procreative controls on the group, rendering subsequent and more violent controls intelligible.
2) By ascribing notions of sexualised and racialised deviance to the Rohingya, this group was constructed as a threat within the popular imaginary by the Tatmadaw. On this basis, the Tatmadaw were able to initiate attacks on the Rohingya, with these increasing in frequency from 2012 onwards.[186] When the ARSA eventually responded with (limited) force, the narrative of the Rohingya being terrorists was given credibility. Furthermore, with subsequent Tatmadaw operations displacing hundreds of thousands of Rohingya from their homeland, the notion of them swamping other races with their 'uncontrollable birth rates'[187] was also made tangible. This rendered the subject position of 'The (Rohingya) Deviant' intelligible within the broader Burmese body-politic.
3) Due to gendered stereotypes which portray women as carers and men as protectors, genocidal violence often targeted men and women in a 'root and branch'[188] structure; killing men first through direct violence and women later, often through sexual or structural violence. Due to women being the victims of lethal attacks much less frequently than men,[189] post-genocidal societies have a high ratio of women to men. With women left to piece communities back together in the wake of the genocide, this reaffirms the idea that women are carers with responsibility for familial/community relations, whilst men are fighters/protectors, signified by their absence in the wake of the genocide. These gender roles directly map onto the public/private divide, perpetuating the existence of this social structure and, in doing so, memories of traumatic attacks against the home.

183. Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 2.
184. Ferrales, Nyseth Brehm, and Mcelrath, 'Gender-Based Violence against Men and Boys in Darfur', 579.
185. Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*', 5.
186. Ibid., 7–8.
187. Ibid., 7.
188. Jones, 'Gendercide and Genocide', 193.
189. Jones, *Gender Matters in Global Politics*,147.

4) With genocidal rape often featuring overwhelming acts of violence in the context of dehumanising and degrading rituals,[190] this represents a clear attempt to denigrate the victim as a representation of the community at large.[191] Due to the commonplace exclusion of women who are known to have been raped by 'the enemy' from their communities,[192] they are often alienated from the support networks they previously depended on. Such perceptions of rape survivors being 'tainted' again reinforce heterosexual logics, in this case through the subject-position of 'The Rape Victim', associated with feminisation and a lack of agency.

Ergo, by looking at the above subject-positions, it becomes clear that genocidal violence provides feedback into the heteronormative logics which enable it in the first place. This means that these violences can be read as performance of (post)colonial heterosexuality. Due to having limited space, I do not have the ability to elaborate on this further beyond drawing attention to the Rohingya Genocide as a process of subjectification. Genocidal violence constitutes both a physical and a discursive act, actively attempting to transform targeted groups and individuals into the subject-positions in which genocidal violence is rooted. With these heteronormative subject-positions shored-up, the persistence of the damage inflicted by the genocide is secured, impeding the community's future procreative abilities.

That being said, it is precisely in the existence of genocide as a performance of heterosexuality that possibilities for resistance can be realised. This is because all performances always feature the possibility of failure, whether this be through 'the failure to repeat, a deformity, or a parodic repetition'.[193] Genocidal violence is no different, and each stage of the emergence, legitimisation and organisation of violence in the Rohingya Genocide also constitutes a performance that can be destabilised. The crucial role that women play in rebuilding communities in the wake of a genocide, for example, is a possible basis for contesting narratives that attempt to disempower women who have been raped. Similarly, having an independent media which is willing to and capable of challenging exclusionary logics in the lead-up to genocidal violence could expose characterisations of marginalised groups as deviants to be constructed, preventing violence from emerging. By exposing the heteronormative premises of genocidal violence to be a 'politically tenuous construction',[194] future instances of genocidal violence could therefore be prevented. Whilst exploring possibilities for

190. Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*' (U.N. Human Rights Council, September 2018), 15.
191. Joeden-Forgey, 'The Devil in the Details', 93.
192. Donatilla Mukamana and Petra Brysiewicz, 'The Lived Experience of Genocide Rape Survivors in Rwanda', *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 40, no. 4 (2008): 379–84, 379, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1547-5069.2008.00253.x.
193. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 141.
194. Ibid.

resisting narratives associated with genocidal violence is not the aim of this article, it is an important observation that requires further attention.

Conclusion

Postcolonial genocidal violence can be read as a performance of heterosexuality due to it being rooted in attempts to destroy heteronormative social bonds, which are themselves traceable back to the imposition of colonial rule.[195] Illustrating this through reference to the Rohingya Genocide in Myanmar, in this article I have explained how the emergence and organisation of genocidal violence is rooted in a step-by-step process of othering and group destruction. More specifically, I argued that each stage of genocidal violence centrally attempts to restrict the reproductive possibilities of the targeted group, whether this be through cross-generational discourses of biological essentialism or in attempts to weaponise the private sphere through the use of shock tactics. After demonstrating how the weaponisation of heteronormative subject-positions produced the conditions for the occurrence of the Rohingya Genocide, I explained how genocidal violence can be interpreted as a performance of heterosexuality. This is because it gives the heteronormative subject-positions it is rooted in the appearance of facts, for example by making victims of sexual violence appear to be lacking in agency due to them being cast out by their community. From this observation, it becomes clear that genocide scholars need to pay much greater attention to heteronormative logics in genocidal violence that targets queers and non-queers alike.

Where queers are targeted, the relevance of sexuality to the study of genocide is clear. Where this violence is rooted in an assumption of heterosexuality and heterosexual group reproduction, the study of sexuality is also of crucial importance. This is because heteronormativity and colonialism work in tandem to cast out groups that political leaders seek to marginalise, with this process traceable from early colonialism to genocidal violence in the present day. With the emergence, legitimisation, and organisation of genocidal violence rooted in heteronormativity, it is undoubtable that greater attention must be paid to the relationship between heteronormativity/anti-queerness and the character of mass violence.[196] This supports well-established arguments[197] that queer international relations scholarship offers hugely important insights that would be of value to critical

195. See Tallie, *Queering Colonial Natal*; Finley, 'Decolonizing the Queer Native Body; and Smith, 'Queer Theory and Native Studies'.

196. See also Waites, 'Genocide and Global Queer Politics', and Nellans, 'A Queer(Er) Genocide Studies' for other crucial contributions on the relationship between heteronormativity and genocide.

197. See Cynthia Weber, 'Why Is There No Queer International Theory?', *European Journal of International Relations* 21, no. 1 (2014): 27–51. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066114524236

security, ontological security and mass atrocities research, in particular. A key idea of importance here is that failed performances are as important as successful ones,[198] with the study of failed attempts to initiate, legitimise or organise violence offering a promising avenue of research for genocide prevention. More specifically, it is important that greater insights are gained into cases where those commissioning genocidal violence have failed to construct targeted populations as other, disempowered, inferior, vulnerable or deviant in line with heteronormative logics, and the impact that this has had on the proliferation of violence.

Finally, understanding heteronormativity as central to mass violence has the potential to inform how we study global atrocity prevention/response efforts and frameworks. It is not only genocidal violence that is rooted in heteronormative and colonial logics, but also global responses to these atrocity crimes, which are often led by the Western powers who were central to the establishment of colonialism in the first place.[199] Given this, a hugely profitable avenue for future research would be unpacking how heteronormativity informs global governance in relation to atrocity crimes. Whilst we are a long way off eradicating or responding effectively to genocidal violence, I hope that this article goes some way to exposing the performative character of this violence and the necessity of using queer arguments to study mass violence. Furthermore, I hope it stimulates a greater discussion of the ways in which (post)colonial heteronormativity continues to produce the conditions for genocidal violence in many parts of the world.

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ORCID iD

Patrick Vernon https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1119-087X

198. See Lauren Wilcox, 'Practising Gender, Queering Theory', *Review of International Studies* 43, no. 5 (2017): 789–808. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0260210517000183

199. See Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages;* and Rahul Rao, 'Queer Questions', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 16, no. 2 (2014): 199–217. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2014.901817 for recent studies of the hetero/homonormative logics that underpin interventionism.

Author biography

Patrick Vernon is a PhD researcher in the Department of Political Science and International Studies at the University of Birmingham. He is currently exploring the heteronormative dimensions of mass violence and responses to mass violence. More broadly, he is interested in queer and postcolonial IR theory, post-truth politics and discourses/practices of sexuality, security and violence.