

CYNTHIA WEBER

**QUEER
INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS**



Sovereignty, Sexuality and the Will to Knowledge

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The ‘Normal *and/or* Perverse Homosexual’ in International Relations

The ‘Eurovisioned Bearded Drag Queen’

Who is ‘the normal *and/or* perverse homosexual’ in international relations? And how does the will to knowledge about the ‘normal *and/or* perverse homosexual’ participate in the figuration of ‘sovereign man’?

A range of diverse figurations of ‘homosexuality’ and ‘the homosexual’ in international relations exceed categorization as exclusively normal or perverse in relation to sexes, genders, and sexualities. These figurations matter for IR because they participate in the organization and regulation of international relations and inform IR theory and practice by complicating sexualized orders of international relations that require the ‘homosexual’ to be *either* normal *or* perverse.

Queer IR and transnational/global queer studies scholars are producing a growing body of literature that investigates such figurations. Familiar to IR scholars might be how figurations of Thai ‘ladyboys’ function in international sex trafficking (Winter and King 2013) or how figurations of ‘the asexual Japanese couple’ inform domestic and international scenarios that link sexual and economic (re)production (Haworth 2013). Less familiar to

IR audiences might be analyses of less obviously sexualized and queered IR figurations, including of ‘the torturer’ (Richter-Montpetit 2014a), ‘the slave’ (Agathangelou 2013), ‘the nationally bordered body’ (Weber 1998; Sjoberg 2014; Peterson 2015), ‘the revolutionary state and citizen’ (Weber 1999; Lind and Keating 2013), and the ‘homosexual’ more generally (Weiss and Bosnia 2014).¹

Discussing each of these IR figurations and their importance in IR is beyond the scope of this chapter. Because my aim here is to illustrate how the ‘normal *and/or* perverse homosexual’ functions as a (potentially) plural foundation (what I call in chapter 2 a ‘queer logoi’) in a queer logic of statecraft, I limit my analysis to one case study. That is of the figuration of Eurovision Song Contest winner and the self-identified ‘homosexual’ Tom Neuwirth and/as the bearded drag queen Conchita Wurst (Neuwirth/Wurst).

At least since winning the 2014 Eurovision Song Contest and announcing in her/his/their acceptance speech, ‘We are unity, and we are unstoppable’, Tom Neuwirth and/as Conchita Wurst has been taken up by some Europeans as a figuration who embodies *either* a positive *or* a negative image of an integrated ‘Europe’. This places Neuwirth/Wurst in an *either/or* logic of statecraft as mancraft (Ashley 1989), in which the crafting of a singular ‘sovereign man’ for ‘the European Community’ functions through a traditional understanding of sovereignty as ‘a complex practice of authorization, a practice through which specific agencies are enabled to draw a line’ between who can legitimately be included and excluded from the political community this ‘European sovereign man’ grounds (Walker 2000, 22; also see Walker 1993). In this traditional *either/or* logic of statecraft as mancraft, what is debated is whether or not Neuwirth/Wurst as a proposed ‘sovereign man’ of ‘the new Europe’ is/should be licensed to draw a line between ‘properly integrated and normalized Europeans’ and ‘improperly integrated and perverse Europeans’ in a ‘Europe’ that has been striving for integration in one form or another since the end of World War II.

Understanding Neuwirth/Wurst in this way required ‘Europeans’ to read Neuwirth/Wurst as a figure who is knowable and placeable along

an *either/or* axis—in relation to 'Europe' and in relation to traditional 'European' debates about 'European' integration. Yet, as I will argue, while Neuwirth/Wurst certainly seems to be making a call for some kind of unity from a platform that has traditionally promoted 'European' integration, Neuwirth/Wurst does so as a figure who defies traditional understandings of integration across multiple axes. These include (but are not necessarily confined to) sex, gender, sexuality, race, geopolitics, and secular and religious renderings of authority. This means that while Neuwirth/Wurst has been mobilized as a singular 'sovereign man' on behalf of an integrated 'European' statecraft as mancraft (as *either* a positive figuration of a new normal 'Europe' *or* as a negative figuration of a new perverse 'Europe'), Neuwirth/Wurst exceeds the singularity of these *either/or* claims. This is because Neuwirth/Wurst is both one thing *or* another (normal *or* perverse) and simultaneously one thing *and* another (normal *and* perverse), with respect to 'European' integration and with respect to integration more broadly. This makes Neuwirth/Wurst a potential plural *and/or* foundation of what I call a queer logic of statecraft, whose call for unity from a 'European' integration platform is far more complex than it might at first appear to be.

To unpack these complexities, I offer two readings of Neuwirth/Wurst. First, I read Neuwirth/Wurst's figuration of the 'Eurovisioned bearded drag queen' as one thing *and/or* another—as the 'normal *and/or* perverse homosexual' in the registers of sexes, genders, and sexualities as well as in the register of international relations. I then consider Neuwirth/Wurst's figuration as *either* one thing *or* another—as *either* the 'normal homosexual' *or* the 'perverse homosexual' in both of these registers. I conclude by considering how Neuwirth/Wurst makes possible a thorough rethinking of what the process of 'European integration' might mean and what a sovereign 'integrated Europe' might become. But this possibility, I argue, can only be realized if we read Neuwirth/Wurst through the lens of queer logics of statecraft.

To be clear, I employ queer logics of statecraft neither to celebrate nor to condemn the vast spectrum of 'differences' across which Neuwirth/Wurst is figured, as making either move would reduce Neuwirth/Wurst

to one or another variety of the ‘simple sovereign subject’ (Soto 2010, 3–4) who would necessarily be read as *either* a dangerous ‘impurity’ *or* as a transgressive, liberating ‘pure impurity’ (Maya, quoted in Soto 2010, 3–4). Instead, I employ queer logics of statecraft to explore how Neuwirth/Wurst is figured as *either* dangerous *or* liberating as well as both dangerous *and* liberating at the same time, to analyze what these (im)possible figurations of Neuwirth/Wurst (might) do and (might) mean.

Before I launch into this reading, I set the scene by offering a few historical details about the Eurovision Song Contest—the platform for ‘European’ integration that propelled Neuwirth/Wurst to fame—and a few theoretical details about integration theory and its practice in ‘Europe’.

THE EUROVISION SONG CONTEST AND THE INTEGRATION OF ‘EUROPE’

The modern project of ‘European’ integration grew out of a post–World War II desire by ‘European’ states ‘to create, by establishing an economic community, the basis for a broader and deeper community among peoples long divided by bloody conflicts and to lay the foundations of institutions which will give direction to a destiny henceforward shared’ (European Economic Union 1957, 2). Over the years, an increasing number of first Western-bloc and then former Eastern-bloc ‘European’ countries have signed up to this pan-‘European’ aim, forming a variety of formal institutions from the European Coal and Steel Community (established in 1950) to the Western European Union (est. 1954) to the European Economic Community (est. 1957) to the present-day European Union (est. 1993).

The variability of these formal institutions notwithstanding, ‘European’ integration has always been imagined as a process productive of ‘an emerging state, a bigger version of the states being incorporated into it, a higher version of the states being incorporated below it’ (Walker 2000, summarizing Haas 1970). As R. B. J. Walker explains, this vision of ‘European’ integration is built upon a modern understanding of state sovereignty

that functions across two spatial axes—a horizontal territorial axis and a vertical legal and ethical axis (Walker 2000, 15). Because the practice of sovereignty—the practice of investing legitimate political authority in an agent in whose name a political community governs—enables this agent (this 'sovereign man', for example) to draw a line between who can legitimately be included and excluded from the political community 'he' grounds (Walker 2000, 22), Walker claims that sovereignty is an inherently spatial practice.

On Walker's reading, modern 'European' integration aspires to expand horizontally, to increase its territorial scale. In the language of 'European' integration, greater territorial scale is equated with progressing the project of 'European' integration. Temporally, this increased scale is also classified by pan-'Europeans' as attesting to the greater maturity of 'Europe', because it marks the progress of 'Europe' from distinctive, warring nation-states to one integrated, more peaceful state-like political community (Walker 2000, 16).

At the same time, 'European' integration aspires to create a top-down hierarchical chain of authority around legal and ethical issues, with pan-'European' legal institutions (e.g., European Court of Human Rights) exercising sovereign authority and ethical leadership over individual national 'European' legal institutions. For Walker, this pan-'European' desire to replace 'the horizontal universality of modern nation-states' with a hierarchical universe of 'European' legal institutions 'expresses a profound nostalgia for an imminent return of the Great Chain of Being' found in medieval Christendom (Walker 2000, 17), in which it was God's sovereign authority that bestowed upon medieval rulers their divine right to rule over their subjects. This was before 'modern man' displaced God as the (popular) sovereign foundation of the modern nation-state. Taken together, claims Walker, 'The history of debates about European integration [is] largely a story of claims about the relative priority of horizontal space and vertical space, of territorial space and a spatially conceived hierarchy of higher and lower' (2000, 18).

Walker's reading of 'European' integration does not end quite as pan-'Europeans' would have it—either in the successful establishment of

pan-‘European’ sovereignty or in its failure thanks to entrenched individual nation-based ‘European’ sovereignties. Rather, it ends in puzzlement over how these two understandings persist in defining the horizon of what modern ‘Europe’ is or might become. This is because for Walker, following Ernst Haas, ‘The imaginaries of both a states-system [of ‘European’ nations-states] and a hierarchy of levels [with some ‘European’ community over these ‘European’ nation-states] seem just too simple’ to describe modern ‘Europe’ (Walker 2000, 19). For it fails to express the character of sovereignty itself, which Walker defines as ‘a complex practice of authorization’ that makes the horizontal and vertical spatial arrangements he describes meaningful and authoritative (2000, 22). Explains Walker, ‘State sovereignty is not a permanent or unchanging principle or institution but a practice with history, or better, a genealogy, and a practice with characteristic modes of performance. State sovereignty is historically constituted and historically variable’ (2000, 23), regardless of whether or not it aspires to designate a distinct national space or a pan-‘European’ space.

This does not stop ‘European’ political communities from attempting to solve complex problems of the authorization of an authority and its proper relationships among citizens, states and a ‘European’ superstate ‘by obscuring/reifying a multiplicity of potential identities and interests under the (paradoxically) universalizing banner of a single sovereign identity/interest [e.g., a state or the ‘European Community’]’ (Walker 2000, 24). This is done, as we learned from Ashley (1989), by crafting a particular authority—God in classical times, sovereign man in modern times—as the presumably ahistorical, authoritative sovereign foundation of ‘Europe’ who both springs from and guarantees the legitimacy of the horizontal and vertical spatial arrangements of a sovereign ‘Europe’ in a way that affirms ‘the impossibility of reopening the questions [about ‘European’ sovereignty]’ to which it responds’ (Walker 2000, 25). Put in Richard Ashley’s terms, modern ‘European’ statecraft is modern ‘European’ mancraft.

It is out of this imaginary of ‘European’ integration that the Eurovision Song Contest grew. The Eurovision Song Contest was the brainchild of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), a collective of individual ‘European’ national broadcasters. Described as ‘the first “Europeans” who

thought of a European cultural policy' (Bourdon 2007, 264), the EBU was charged with regenerating the dream of 'European' cultural integration once it became clear that post-World War II 'European' cultural integration did not automatically follow from economic integration. Combining communicative theories of nation building with theories of television, EBU members developed a 'communicative view of the nation' (in IR, for example, see Deutsch 1966; Anderson 1983; Kegley 1993) that positioned television as the key medium to 'address the problem of European culture as if Europe should be modelled on the large European nation' (Bourdon 2007, 276, 275). Seizing on television as a form of visual communication that could overcome obstacles to cultural integration posed by a multi-lingual and multinational 'Europe', 'Many of the EBU members were convinced that television was the medium that could forge a new collective conscience and help the new Europe supersede the old nations' (Bourdon 2007, 264–265). This led them to launch a series of live broadcast format TV shows simulcast throughout 'Europe', in hopes of creating a 'broader and deeper community' of 'Europeans' and to publicize the EBU itself. The Eurovision Song Contest was their first such broadcast.

The Eurovision Song Contest is the largest song contest in the world and one of the most popular televisual events in contemporary 'Europe'. Begun in 1956, it pits nationally selected acts from each participating, eligible 'European' country against one another in a song contest.² Performed songs range from catchy pop tunes to melodramatic ballads and generally reference the nation they represent—through costumes, musical styles and lyrics, dance moves, set designs, and language (although the majority of acts are now performed in English). The competition's finale has been broadcast on live television and radio throughout 'Europe' since the competition's inception and helped to launch the careers of the Spanish singer Julio Iglesias and the Swedish pop group ABBA (who won for their performance of 'Waterloo').

As Jérôme Bourdon notes, the success of the Eurovision Song Contest overshadowed the larger aims of the EBU. He puts it like this: 'The operation was successful but the patient died: the Song Contest fast became highly popular, to the point that in many countries the word "Eurovision"

refers not to a brave effort to broadcast in a truly European way, but to a specific event, the Song Contest itself' (2007, 265). Some fifty years later, the Eurovision Song Contest (hereafter 'Eurovision') is one of the longest running TV shows in the world, with an estimated annual viewing audience of 180 million (Eurovision.com). Today, it is broadcast on live television not only throughout 'Europe' but also in Australia, Canada, Egypt, Hong Kong, India, Jordan, Korea, New Zealand, and the United States, and it is streamed live on the web at Eurovision.tv (Eurovision.com).

Eurovision has not—as EBU 'cultural Europeans' had hoped—'engineered the European soul' into existence (Bourdon 2007, 277). Rather, like many transnational institutions and events that embrace some ideal of transnational community—from the United Nations to the Olympics—Eurovision often accentuates nationalist sentiments rather than cultivates pan-'European' ones. For example, national broadcasters generally hype their nation's entry, national viewing populations generally rally around their nation's act, and national feelings of pride or shame can follow from voting results (especially as the triumphant national act wins not just the Song Contest itself but the right for the nation from which the act comes to host the following year's Eurovision).

One of the most striking aspects of Eurovision is the nationalist voting trends of its participating states. While nations cannot vote for their own entries (thus promoting pan-'Europeanism'), they regularly vote for those states with whom they are somehow closely aligned. For example, the UK and Ireland regularly give one another top votes, as do Germany and Turkey, Spain and Portugal, and Russia and Ukraine. These voting patterns closely map onto the histories of changing 'European' borders and onto historical migration trends that enable (quasi-)nationalist voting to appear to be transnational (e.g., when Spanish ex-pats or their descendants who live in Portugal vote for the Spanish entry). What alters these highly predictable outcomes are generally two phenomena—any given year's regional/global political context and how acts appeal to both traditional fans (heteronormative, cisidentified fans, whose allegiance to the contest is based in its pan-'European' roots) and nontraditional fans (homonormative, queer, or trans* fans, who watch the contest for its camp

appeal) who constitute Eurovision's national telephone voters *and* to the recently introduced national judging panels composed of music professionals who award 50% of their nation's votes.

At Eurovision 2014, Russia's annexation of the Crimea two months before the Song Contest provided the immediate regional/global context that year. The general anti-Russian sentiment the annexation generated at least in the West and in the Western-facing regions of the remaining Ukraine ensured that the Russian act performing in Copenhagen—twin sisters whose song was by Eurovision standards not bad at all—was booed and awarded only four out of a potential twelve points from Ukraine. In turn, the Ukrainian act was booed by a small contingent of pro-Russian audience members and received only seven out of a possible twelve points from Russia. Sentiments around Russia's federal antigay 'propaganda' law also fed into Eurovision 2014. While in the news since its passage in 2013, this Russian law became a focal point of European and international contention during the Russian-hosted Sochi Winter Olympics three months before the Song Contest, further mobilizing support for or opposition against its figuration of the 'homosexual' as perverse (for general debates, see Wilkinson 2013; 2014). It was against this geopolitical background that the 'bearded drag queen' Tom Neuwirth and/as Conchita Wurst performed at and won Eurovision 2014.

That a self-identified 'homosexual' drag queen would win Eurovision 2014 comes as little surprise, particularly to 'LGBT/queer/trans*' Eurovision fans who have watched the event year on year. This is both because the self-identified trans* Israeli singer Dana International who Neuwirth/Wurst cites as an inspiration won Eurovision in 1998 (Halutz 2014)³ and because the 'LGBT/queer/trans*' Eurovision fan base has grown so large over the years that some commentators describe Eurovision as 'the Gay World Cup', 'gay Christmas', or 'Passover for homos' (for discussion, see Baker 2014a). And in 2015, Australia was invited to be a guest entry in the contest, a move some attributed to the vast 'LGBT/queer/trans*' Australian viewing audience. Yet that a 'bearded drag queen' (and, as I will go on to elaborate, *this specific figuration of the 'bearded drag queen'*) was even competing in the event seemed to shock and appall many 'European'

political and religious leaders on the one hand and to galvanize support for a homonormative agenda of tolerance around sexual diversity on the other. What divided these two factions was how they interpreted the figuration of Neuwirth/Wurst—as *either* a ‘perverse homosexual’ *or* as a ‘normal homosexual’—and how they connected that figuration to ‘Europe’.

For example, Neuwirth/Wurst was publically reviled by some Eastern ‘European’ political and religious leaders in the run-up to the Eurovision finals. Russia’s deputy prime minister, Dmitry Rogozin, claimed that Neuwirth/Wurst ‘showed supporters of European integration their European future: a bearded girl’ (quoted in Davies 2014). Russian nationalist politician Vladimir Zhirinovskiy claimed Neuwirth/Wurst signified ‘the end of Europe’ because ‘they don’t have men and women any more. They have “it”’ (Davies 2014). After Neuwirth/Wurst’s victory, several church leaders in the Balkans declared that the floods that devastated the region in the aftermath of Eurovision were ‘divine punishment’ for Neuwirth/Wurst’s victory. As Patriarch Amfilohije of Montenegro put it, ‘This [flood] is not a coincidence, but a warning. God sent the rains as a reminder that people should not join the wild side’ (Telegraph Foreign Staff 2014). In contrast, Austrian Green MEP Ulrike Lunacek—the first openly lesbian politician in the European Parliament—led a group of MEPs from different political parties who invited Neuwirth/Wurst as Conchita Wurst to give a concert and a speech at the European Parliament after Neuwirth/Wurst’s victory. At the event, Lunacek commented, ‘Conchita Wurst has a very important political message, that doesn’t have anything to do with parties or regular work in the party. It has to do with what the EU stands for: Equal rights, fundamental rights, the right to live your life without fear, for LGBT and other minorities’ (EurActiv 2014).

What makes these incitements of Neuwirth/Wurst as a ‘European’ issue so interesting are two things. First, given the strong nationalist and weak pan-European tendencies of Eurovision, it seems odd that the figuration of Neuwirth/Wurst should rise to the level of ‘European’ political commentary. Religious commentaries for or against Neuwirth/Wurst might be less unexpected, in light of ongoing debates in religious circles about ‘homosexuality’ and the ‘homosexual’. But taking Neuwirth/Wurst seriously as a

figuration of 'integrated Europe itself' because of her/his/their Eurovision participation and victory suggests that Eurovision is sometimes a space in which what stands for if not 'the European soul' then 'an integrated Europe' is seriously contested, if not resolved. How these contestations take place and are (momentarily) stabilized matters deeply to those nations that are identified (by themselves or by others) as 'European'.

Neuwirth/Wurst's Eurovision victory mattered for 'Europe itself', then, because—in Catherine Baker's terms—Neuwirth/Wurst's victory made her/him/them 'available as a symbol for denoting . . . ideological and geopolitical clashes' (Baker 2014b)⁴ as well as agreements around what it means to be a unified and/or fractured 'Europe' and what it means to be identified as/with this 'Europe'. Neuwirth/Wurst as 'integrated Europe itself', then, was not some purely cultural symbol of 'the gay world cup' (as if a culture vs. politics dichotomy were sustainable; for critiques, see, e.g., Weber 2013). Neuwirth/Wurst was a battleground in national and 'European' political disputes over which specific, singular understanding of Neuwirth/Wurst—as the 'perverse homosexual' or as the 'normal homosexual'—might function as the logos in the logocentric procedure of 'statecraft as mancraft' (Ashley 1989) to ground 'European' statecraft and 'Europe itself'.

What else makes these incitements around Neuwirth/Wurst as a 'European' issue so interesting is how individual national and collective pan-'European' attempts to stabilize Neuwirth/Wurst as either the singular 'perverse homosexual' who marked 'the end of Europe' or as the singular 'normal homosexual' who marked a new age of the tolerance of diversity for 'Europe' seemed to fail. For as Neuwirth/Wurst was put into national and pan-'European' discourses of power/knowledge/pleasure, he/she/they always seemed to convey more than *either* the 'normal homosexual' *or* the 'perverse homosexual'. What else Neuwirth/Wurst seemed to convey was the 'normal *and/or* perverse homosexual'—the plural logoi of a queer logic of statecraft that abides by a pluralized Barthesian logic of the *and/or*. In so doing, Neuwirth/Wurst calls into question the very spatial arrangements of sovereignty—both horizontally and vertically—that an *either/or* logic of statecraft as mancraft is called upon to place beyond question.

In their figurations of Neuwirth/Wurst, ‘European’ leaders failed to consider Neuwirth/Wurst through the lens of queer logics of statecraft, mobilizing Neuwirth/Wurst through traditional logics of statecraft as mancraft, as if Neuwirth/Wurst and/as ‘an integrated Europe’ were knowable and placeable within the *either/or* dichotomous terms of ‘European’ horizontal or vertical space. This is why their debate was about the value or lack thereof of ‘European’ integration as imagined in the same terms ‘European’ integration had been imagined since the end of World War II. As a result, these European leaders generally failed to consider (much less appreciate) what plural constituted Neuwirth/Wurst and how the plural *and/or* logic he/she/they embodies is what made ‘European’ attempts to claim or disown—to normalize or to pervert—this normal *and/or* perverse figure both possible and impossible. This in part explains why national and pan-‘European’ attempts to regiment Neuwirth/Wurst as a singular vision of ‘integrated Europe itself’ seemed to be anything but ahistorical and natural.

The remainder of this chapter unpacks Neuwirth/Wurst’s figuration as/ of the ‘Eurovisioned bearded drag queen’. It does this by making three moves. First, it reads Neuwirth/Wurst’s figuration of the ‘Eurovisioned bearded drag queen’ as both a Barthesian plural figure in general and as what Gloria Anzaldúa calls ‘a border figure’ more specifically. This reading establishes Neuwirth/Wurst as an *and/or* figure in relation to sexes, genders, and sexualities, which is how Neuwirth/Wurst is commonly read. Yet, second, this reading also explores Neuwirth/Wurst as a pluralized ‘border figure’ in the registers of race, geopolitics, and traditional understandings of religious and secular authority as well. All of this arguably situates Neuwirth/Wurst as a figure who could be called upon to serve as a queer logoi in a queer logics of statecraft as mancraft but who seems to defy traditional *either/or* logics of statecraft, which raises the question this chapter addresses in its third reading of Neuwirth/Wurst. That question is—how is it possible for ‘European’ leaders to figure Neuwirth/Wurst through an *either/or* logic as if Neuwirth/Wurst were a singular, ahistorical logos of statecraft as mancraft, when so much evidence suggests this is not the case? My answer in part lies in an exploration of how ‘European’ leaders

mobilized many of the earlier figurations discussed in this book—of the 'perverse homosexual' (as the 'underdeveloped', the 'undevelopable', the 'unwanted im/migrant', and the 'terrorist') versus the 'normal homosexual' (as 'LGBT rights holder')—to figure Neuwirth/Wurst as the 'Eurovisioned bearded drag queen' as *either* a new normalized figure to be celebrated *or* as a long-standing perverse figure who threatens 'Europe itself'.

THE 'EUROVISIONED BEARDED DRAG QUEEN'

Neuwirth/Wurst in the Borderlands of the Normal *and/or* Perverse

A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los atravesados* [the crossers] live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the "normal". (Anzaldúa 1987, 3)

Tom Neuwirth and/as Conchita Wurst is a figure found in the borderlands of sex, gender, sexuality, race, geopolitics, and secular and religious authority who may be said to continuously 'cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the "normal"' (Anzaldúa 1987, 3). This sometimes makes Neuwirth/Wurst appear to be perverse, as in Anzaldúa's depiction of the border figure. Yet, as I will argue here, it also makes Neuwirth/Wurst appear to be both normal *and/or* perverse in general and in particular in debates about 'European integration'.

In 'European' discourses around Eurovision, it is sexes, genders, and sexualities that are the most commented-upon axis of Neuwirth/Wurst's borderland figuration. This seems to be because both in name (Conchita/shell/vagina + Wurst/sausage/penis) and in appearance, Neuwirth/Wurst crosses a number of sexed, gendered, and sexualized binary borders—male versus female, masculine versus feminine, heterosexual

versus homosexual. As Tom Neuwirth, Neuwirth/Wurst appears to be (more compatible with normalized understandings of the) male, masculine, and 'homosexual' than Neuwirth/Wurst appears as Conchita Wurst, who is figured as (more compatible with normalized understandings of the) female, feminine, and heterosexual than is Tom.

This understanding of Tom Neuwirth as opposed to Conchita Wurst is found not only in how 'European' leaders and the press more generally discuss Neuwirth/Wurst in relation to Eurovision but also on Neuwirth/Wurst's *conchitawurst.com* website. On the biography page of the website, Tom is described as a 'private person' who suffered discrimination during his teenage years, which Neuwirth/Wurst has talked about elsewhere as being because of Tom's 'homosexuality' (Bromwich 2014; Wurst 2015). Throughout Tom's bio, Tom is sexed and gendered through the male and masculine pronoun 'he'. In contrast, Conchita Wurst is described as 'the art figure' Tom created. Conchita is sexed and gendered through the female and feminine pronoun 'she' throughout. No mention is made of Conchita's sexuality on the web page, although elsewhere Neuwirth/Wurst has spoken of Conchita Wurst as in a relationship with 'my handsome husband [the performance artist] Jacque in Paris', who Neuwirth/Wurst refers to using male and masculine pronouns (Adams 2012). Conchita's relationship with Jacque makes her otherwise ambiguous sexuality recoverable within a straight, heterosexual logic that pairs female figures with male partners.

What we have here, then, is Tom as the male, 'perverse homosexual' who performatively expresses his 'homosexuality' by creating 'the art figure' Conchita Wurst as an impersonation of (a more normalizable, if exaggerated) female heterosexuality. In so doing, then, the 'drag queen' Neuwirth/Wurst appears to cross over and pass over sexed, gendered, and sexualized binaries of male versus female, masculine versus feminine, and heterosexual versus homosexual.

On some readings, this is enough to make Neuwirth/Wurst a queer figure, a figure who—in Anzaldúa's terms—'go[es] through the confines of the "normal"' (1987, 3), just like the other 'perverse' and 'troublesome' border figures Anzaldúa describes. Yet reading Anzaldúa more closely,

we notice that she complicates her understanding of the 'border figure' through her account of its locations, movements, and temporalities. This is made clear in Anzaldúa's account of the U.S.-Mexico border as '*una herida abierta* [an open wound] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds' (1987, 3) and of how the 'border figure' (specifically the 'lesbian Chicana' for Anzaldúa) is positioned in relation to this border. Anzaldúa writes:

I press my hand to the steel curtain – —
chainlink fence crowned with rolled barbed wire . . .

1,950 mile-long open wound
dividing a *pueblo* [town/community], a culture
running down the length of my body
staking fence rods in my flesh,
splits me splits me
me raja me raja

This is my home
this thin edge of
barbwire (Anzaldúa 1987, 2–3).

In this poetic passage, Anzaldúa positions the 'border figure' as someone who does not just 'cross over, pass over or go through' a border (1987, 3); she positions this figure as one who is so impaled by a border that they both live on and *as* 'a dividing line' in that 'vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary' (1987, 3). This 'dividing line' can be found in the intimate spaces of the body and the home, the local or national spaces of *el pueblo* and the international spaces between and among sovereign nation-states. And it can refer to any 'dividing line' found in these spaces—from those attempting to divide sexes, genders, and sexualities to those attempting to divide races, civilizations, and geopolitical territories, for example.

Because the 'border figure' both crosses and lives on/as the border, the 'border figure' suggests both mobility and immobility. For wherever the

‘border figure’ moves, it carries within itself its border(s), its home—‘this thin edge of barbed wire’ that maintains it as ‘an open wound’. In so doing, the ‘border figure’ suggests that when *los atravesados* are on the move, their borders are on the move with/in them. This is how the ‘border figure’ puts the border on the move. At the same time, the ‘border figure’ disrupts progressive spatial and temporal narratives of forward mobility. For the border lives in the ‘border figure’ as a *persistent* presence—as a moment of static, a constant crack[le], a nonprogressive, out-of-sync pause—that distorts progressive narratives of spatial and temporal movement across/at the border. It does this by appearing as a *here and now*, even as it presumably moves to and between a *there and then*. This is not to say that the border itself is static immobility. To the contrary, the border is ‘in a constant state of transition’ (Anzaldúa 1987, 3). Rather, then, it is to suggest that it is this very state of *constant* transition—a transition that is in a sustained state of transitioning without ever arriving at a state of having fully transitioned—that confronts and possibly provokes those who encounter the ‘border subject’.

As a mobile figure who carries its variously implanted borders with/in it, the ‘border figure’ is reminiscent of many of the figurations discussed in chapter 4—from the ‘unwanted im/migrant’ to the ‘queer diasporic subject’. For as each of these figurations moves, their borders (e.g., North vs. South, developed vs. underdeveloped, homeless vs. feeling at home) move with them. Yet there is something else that is distinctive about the particular ‘border figure’ that emerges from Anzaldúa’s work and that I want to suggest is akin to how Neuwirth/Wurst functions as a ‘border figure’. That distinctiveness is what I think of—following Sedgwick—as a queer distinctiveness. It is a distinctiveness that makes it impossible for this ‘border figure’ to signify monolithically on one side or the other of a border, a dividing line, a binary opposition in relation to sexes, genders, and sexualities. This might be because the ‘border subject’—as a carrier of the border within—cannot signify as one thing or another. Or—as I want to suggest it functions in Anzaldúa’s work and in Neuwirth/Wurst’s performative embodiment of the ‘drag queen’—it might be because this ‘border figure’ (also) *will not* signify as one thing or another.

What is distinctive about both Anzaldúa's figuration of the 'queer Chicana' and Neuwirth/Wurst's mobilization of the 'drag queen' is that in both cases, these 'border figures' deliberately *refuse* to keep to one side or the other of the various binaries that attempt to hold them and their desires in place and in time. They deliberately *refuse* to signify monolithically. And their refusals are arguably rooted in a specific (personal and/or political) project that—while differently articulated—is something they have in common. In this shared project, their aim seems to be to make the border itself a point of contestation by drawing attention to the various borderlands their particular 'border figure' inhabits as/in 'the emotional residue of . . . unnatural boundar[ies]' (Anzaldúa 1987, 3). This is arguably what Anzaldúa's specific figuration of the 'queer Chicana' does and what Tom Neuwirth and/as Conchita Wurst's specific figuration of the 'drag queen' does.

For Anzaldúa, this refusal comes in the form of living on/as the border as the 'queer Chicana'. For Neuwirth/Wurst, it comes in the form of inhabiting the figuration of the 'male homosexual as drag queen'. For Neuwirth/Wurst, this inhabiting is not (as it so often is in relation to this figuration) as a figure who can pass as (hyper)female, (hyper)feminine and/or (hyper)heterosexual. Instead, it is as a figure who cannot *and will not pass* as *either* traditionally male *or* female, masculine *or* feminine, heterosexual *or* homosexual. This figure is, of course, the 'bearded drag queen' or the 'bearded lady' (as Neuwirth/Wurst refers to this figure). For Neuwirth/Wurst, Conchita's highly manicured beard functions as a masculinity disruptive to her otherwise female/feminine/heterosexual figurations. Unlike the beards of the 'white hipster' or the 'racialized-as-nonwhite Muslim', Conchita's closely cropped beard is worn at Eurovision as more of a five o'clock shadow that poses questions about her sex, her gender, and her sexuality and (as I will argue later) her nationality, her civilization, and her race without resolving any of these questions. This makes Neuwirth/Wurst a figure who provokes questions about borders and bordering practices by living on/as rather than just moving through those borders⁵ that attempt to define him/her/them and confine him/her/them to *either* the normal *or* the perverse.

The figures of the ‘bearded drag queen’ and the ‘bearded lady’ both have long histories that precede Neuwirth/Wurst’s mobilization of them. As it has been mobilized in queer histories of theater and performance, the ‘bearded drag queen’ dates back to at least its use by the Cockettes, a 1960s/1970s ‘genderfuck’ performance collective formed in San Francisco (Stryker and Van Buskirk 1996, 63) that included ‘an eclectic mix of gay and straight, black and white, men and women’ (Scott 2002), including bearded drag queens.

The figure of the ‘bearded lady’ has a much longer—and strikingly different—history. Most accounts of the ‘bearded lady’ figure her as a female Christian saint who refuses ‘to get married and enter the patriarchal order (Guenther 2015). This is what the stories associated with Saint Galla (who grew a beard after being widowed), Saint Paula (who told a virgin who grew a beard that this would deter rapists), and the variously named Saint Wilgefortis / Saint Starosta / Saint Uncumber (who grew a beard to prevent her marriage, only to be crucified by her affronted father) all suggest (Guenther 2015; also see Johnson 2007; Krappe 1945; Wallace 2014). In each of these cases, the ‘bearded lady’ is ‘a border figure’ who is out of sync—is a deliberate static (Barthes 1976, 9)—with respect to patriarchy, heterosexual marriage, and (reproductive) heterosexual sex. Because she looks to a Christian God as her sanctuary, she is further positioned as embracing eschatological time as a way to refuse progressive reproductive temporality.

As a figure who is fearful of what will happen to her in the home or in the name of the patriarchal authority who rules the home (heterosexual sex, rape, marriage), the ‘bearded lady’ embodies the unorthodox reinterpretation of ‘homophobia’ that one of Anzaldúa’s lesbian students articulated. On this student’s account, ‘homophobia’ does not refer to the fear of the ‘homosexual’ or of ‘homosexuality’. Rather, it refers to the ‘fear of going home. And of not being taken in’ (1987, 20). It is also fear of the ‘reigning order of heterosexual males’, marked by their ‘sexual lust and lust for power and destruction’ that figure ‘*los atravesados*’/‘the crossers’ as ‘unacceptable, faulty, damaged’ (1987, 20).

The 'bearded lady' is arguably that figure who—confronted with this phobia in/of the patriarchal home—defies expectations, wearing her beard 'to oppose openly and resolutely, with daring or with effrontery'⁶ the unnatural borders of sexed, gendered, and sexualized authority as they are anchored in and as they attempt to anchor her into the traditional patriarchal home. Indeed, in the story of the variously named Saint Wilgefortis / Saint Starosta / Saint Uncumber, this 'bearded lady' does not just grow a beard to escape her marriage, she actively prays to God to help her maintain her vow of chastity, and God replies by giving her a beard to repel her future husband (Rabadi 2002). This explains why the 'bearded lady' is commonly referred to as the 'bearded virgin' or the 'bearded madonna', and it demonstrates the connection between the 'bearded lady' and the Christian God. This, then, is one way in which Neuwirth/Wurst's figuration of the 'bearded drag queen' as the 'bearded lady' engages with Christian theology.

In addition to figuring himself/herself/themselves as the 'bearded lady', there is yet another way that Neuwirth/Wurst is connected to Christian theology. This is through Neuwirth/Wurst's consumption as 'a Jesus-like figure', 'a gay Jesus', 'an inverted Christ figure'.⁷ While Neuwirth/Wurst never verbalizes this connection, he/she/they provoke this reading—both through his/her/their appearance and through how he/she/they performed the song 'Rise Like a Phoenix' at Eurovision. For 'Rise Like a Phoenix' is an anthem celebrating a resurrection, and as Neuwirth/Wurst performs it, Neuwirth/Wurst stretches his/her/their arms out to the side, evoking the image of Christ on the cross.

What we have in Neuwirth/Wurst, then, is a persona who performatively inhabits at least three figurations of the bearded, 'gowned' body at the same time—the 'bearded lady', the '(inverted) Christ', and the 'bearded drag queen'. By crossing without fully combining these figures, Neuwirth/Wurst effectively weaves them and their previously separate and separable histories together. The result is a queer border figure who contains within itself as many barbs as Christ's crown of thorns and as much barbed wire as Anzaldúa's border fence. The effect is to add a

queer link in the ‘Great Chain of Being’ running from a Christian God in heaven to His heavenly Son on earth to a Saintly Bearded Woman to a Bearded Drag Queen.

It is as this complexly crossed (unholy) trinity of the ‘bearded lady’, the ‘(inverted) Christ’, and the ‘Eurovisioned bearded drag queen’ that Neuwirth/Wurst rises like a phoenix out of the ashes of death to seek retribution on behalf of those ‘troubling’, ‘unrecognizable’ figures who are tormented by earthly familial, national, and religious authorities who attempt to police the boundaries between as well as arrange the unifications of presumably opposed sexes and genders in a heterosexual, patriarchal order. Sounding like a resurrected Saint Wilgefortis / Saint Starosta / Saint Uncumber confronting the father who crucified her, Neuwirth/Wurst sings:

Rise like a phoenix
 Out of the ashes
 Seeking rather than vengeance
 Retribution
 You were warned
 Once I’m transformed
 Once I’m reborn
 You know I will rise like a phoenix
 But you’re my flame (Mason et al. 2014)⁸

Once the votes were counted, Neuwirth/Wurst was declared the winner of Eurovision 2014. With the Eurovision Song Contest and all it suggests about ‘European integration’ as his/her/their platform, Neuwirth/Wurst offered this as his/her/their victory speech: ‘This night is dedicated to everyone who believes in a future of peace and freedom. You know who you are—we are unity and we are unstoppable’ (BBC 2014). Upon uttering these words, Neuwirth/Wurst faced the audience with a defiant look on his/her/their face and thrust the Eurovision trophy into the air. Backstage, Neuwirth/Wurst elaborated on his/her/their victory remarking, ‘I dream of a world where we don’t have to talk about unnecessary things like sexuality, who you love. I felt like tonight Europe showed that we are a community of respect and tolerance’ (BBC 2014).

As a figure who uses sexes, genders, and sexualities to cross religious and secular authority as a way to authorize 'Europe' as 'a community of respect and tolerance,' Neuwirth/Wurst fuses the 'European community' with 'respect and tolerance' of sexed, gendered, and sexualized variance. In so doing, Neuwirth/Wurst stands as a figure of defiance in relation to the double understanding of homophobia discussed above—as the fear of the 'homosexual' and of 'homosexuality' on the one hand and as the fear in the 'homosexual' of the home, on the other. What is less apparent—and, indeed, what is often actively concealed—is how Neuwirth/Wurst embodies a third meaning of 'homophobia'—what I would call fear in the 'homosexual' of the homeland.

This third understanding of homophobia seems to be the very thing that Neuwirth/Wurst's victory at Eurovision triumphs over. For it is this victory that Neuwirth/Wurst mobilizes to christen a newly figured respectful and tolerant 'European community.' This 'European community,' Neuwirth/Wurst is suggesting, is not a place that the 'homosexual' has to fear. But by temporalizing this 'European community' as having emerged 'tonight,' Neuwirth/Wurst does two things. First, Neuwirth/Wurst suggests this respectful and tolerant 'European community' is the culmination of a progressive 'European' journey to 'a world where we don't have to talk about unnecessary things like sexuality, who you love' (BBC 2014). At the same time, Neuwirth/Wurst simultaneously concedes that the 'European Community' did not exist with this respect and tolerance for 'homosexuality' and the 'homosexual' before 'tonight.' In other words, before the Eurovision 2014 final, 'homosexual' figures like Neuwirth/Wurst may well have lived in fear of their homelands. And, quite specifically, it seems that Tom Neuwirth *before* Conchita Wurst was one of those 'homosexuals' who explicitly *did* fear his homeland because of how he as a 'homosexual' was treated there.

This understanding of homophobia as the fear in the 'homosexual' of the homeland and Neuwirth/Wurst's complicated relationship to this understanding of homophobia finds expression in the official biographical details about Neuwirth/Wurst, Tom Neuwirth, and Conchita Wurst that were circulated before, during, and in the immediate aftermath of

Eurovision 2014. To make this case, let's begin by considering the version of Neuwirth/Wurst's *conchitawurst.com* biography page that was available at the time of Eurovision in May 2014. Titled 'CONCHITA WURST biography', this page begins with a quote for which there is no attribution—'Two hearts beating in my chest'. Underneath this quote is the following paragraph:

They are a team just working in sync. Although they have never met before—they are constantly missing each other in the mirror. The private person Tom Neuwirth and the art figure Conchita Wurst respect each other from the bottom of their hearts. They are two individual characters with their own individual stories, but with one essential message for tolerance and against discrimination.⁹

After offering separate biographies for Tom and Conchita, the page concludes with an explanation of how Conchita came into being, noting:

Because of the discrimination against Tom in his teenage-years, he created Conchita, The Bearded Lady, as a statement. A statement for tolerance and acceptance—as it's not about appearances: it's about the human being. 'Everybody should live their lives the way they want, as long as nobody else gets hurt or is restricted in their own way of life.'

In a later version of the biography page, Conchita's genealogy with respect to Tom is further clarified.

Conchita owes her existence to the fact that Tom had been dealing with discrimination all his life. Therefore he created a woman with a beard—a striking statement and catalyst for discussions about terms like "different" and "normal", as well as a vehicle to bring his message to the entire world in a clear and unmistakable way.¹⁰

On the surface, this story of how Conchita Wurst came to embody Tom Neuwirth's 'striking statement' against discrimination seems to be a rejection of only the first two understandings of homophobia discussed above

(as well as of a wide range of phobias of sex-/gender-/sexuality-variant people). Yet if we read Neuwirth/Wurst though the specific details about Tom and Conchita provided on the biography page of conchitawurst.com and elsewhere around the time of Eurovision 2014, we can trace how the additional understanding of homophobia as the fear in the 'homosexual' of the homeland is embedded in these figures. On conchitawurst.com, Tom's and Conchita's bios read like this:

Tom

- born on 6.11.1988 in Gmunden.
- raised in the Styrian countryside.
- Tom appeared in 2007 on the Austrian casting show 'Starmania'.
- He graduated from the Graz School of Fashion in 2011.
- and since then he has lived in various locations in Vienna.

Conchita

- born in the mountains of Colombia.
- and raised in Germany.
- She appeared in 2011 on the Austrian casting show 'Die große Chance'.
- and was one of the national contestants for the ESC [Eurovision Song Contest] in 2012.
- and is the Austrian representative for ESC in 2014.¹¹

Here, Tom is figured as an Austrian birthright citizen, making him 'European'. While not mentioned on the bio page, Tom's apparent whiteness allows him to be read as not just 'European' but as 'properly European'. In contrast, Conchita is figured as a Colombian citizen who—because she was raised in Germany—might also be a German citizen. A biography of Conchita that was widely circulated after Neuwirth/Wurst's selection in September 2013 as Austria's representative to Eurovision 2014 offers further details about Conchita.

Conchita Wurst grew up in the Colombian highlands surrounded by the sound of swinging powder puffs and the rustling of layers made out of delicate tulle. One day her mother, a popular actress, met by fate

her father, Alfred of Knack and Wurst, an even more successful theater director—and fell in love with him. Within that same year she gave birth to her first daughter Conchita, named after the great-grandmother BarbadaConchita (the Bearded). It soon became obvious that the small “Knackwurst” was determined to become someone great and successful (Konstantopoulos 2013).

Because this September 2013 biography was most widely circulated in Austria, it is important to tease out the play on words in Conchita’s father’s name—Alfred of Knack and Wurst. Wurst, as noted above, refers literally to ‘sausage’ and figuratively to ‘penis’ or the colloquial expression ‘It doesn’t matter’, which Neuwirth/Wurst says refers to how it doesn’t and shouldn’t matter what one’s gender presentation is or who one loves. *Knack* is also a loaded term in German. It literally means “attractive, juicy, voluptuous” and generally refers to a bursting sound, as in the sound of the knackwurst (German sausage) bursting out of its skin. Together, these meanings of knack combine in another popular German expression—*knackarsch*, which refers to a voluptuous ass bursting attractively out of one’s tight jeans. This is what is suggested by Conchita ‘the small “Knackwurst”, who goes on to find fame in ‘Europe’. Combined with Neuwirth/Wurst’s figuration as the ‘homosexual’, what is also suggested by Conchita’s lineage to Knack and Wurst is the entire scene of sodomy (the nice ass and the bursting penis).¹²

Read together, what these biographical details about Tom and Conchita tell us is that it was the third understanding of homophobia—homophobia as fear in the ‘homosexual’ of the homeland—that seems to have led Tom Neuwirth to create Conchita Wurst.¹³ This is because Tom invented Conchita not just as a strikingly sexed, gendered, and sexualized statement about ‘difference’ and defiance but also as a strikingly transnational and transracial refuge from the homophobia he experienced in his Austrian homeland. For Conchita is not merely Austrian or ‘European’, as Tom is; she is a figure who was ‘born in the mountains of Colombia’—a place romanticized in Western coffee bean advertisements that would play well in Viennese coffee culture¹⁴—to a Colombian mother and German father before being raised in Germany. She is the product of a transnational

family, and it is her maternal Colombian lineage that accounts for her appearance as the 'bearded lady'. What might be implied here is that it is only in the imagined idyllic space of Colombia—like the imagined idyllic space of the city—where the nonheteronormative bearded Conchitas can find acceptance.¹⁵

Conchita's pedigree also potentially marks her as transracial, an aspect of the 'border figure' that is foreshadowed in Anzaldúa's poetic claim that the border fence, 'me raja' (it splits me). For the Spanish word *raja* can be used to signify sex (*raja* means vagina) and race (*tener raja* means to have black blood). From a dominant Western perspective, then, this puts the 'purity' of Conchita's race and 'Europeanness' into doubt, further figuring Conchita through the trope of racial degeneration as racial mixing (Bhabha 1994; Stoler 1995; Hoad 2000). For Conchita might be 'indigenous' and/or 'white' and/or some other type of 'mestiza' or 'black-blooded' figure, just as she might be Colombian like her mother and/or German like her father and/or Austrian like Tom who performs her.

These additional biographical details about Tom and Conchita, then, multiply the axes upon which Conchita functions in Neuwirth/Wurst's triangulated *and/or* logics. For while Neuwirth/Wurst relies upon Conchita's (and Tom's) *and/or* sexes, genders, and sexualities to compose a fundamental part of his/her/their (unholy) trinity of religious and secular authority, Neuwirth/Wurst also relies upon these very same *and/or* logics to compose two additional trinities in which Conchita, Tom, and Neuwirth/Wurst are embedded—one around nationality (Colombian, German, Austrian) and another around race (indigenous, white, mestiza). At the same time, in the register of 'civilization' Neuwirth/Wurst also resembles 'the half and half' figure Anzaldúa describes as 'the coming together of [presumed] opposite qualities within' (1987, 19). For while Neuwirth/Wurst remains (because both Tom and Conchita remain) within what Samuel Huntington calls the civilization of Western Christendom, Neuwirth/Wurst is impaled with the very barbed wire border that Anzaldúa critiques and that Huntington reifies—between what Anzaldúa calls the 'First World' and the 'Third World' (1987, 3) and between what Huntington calls 'the American Creed' and 'the Hispanic Challenge' (2009).

By creating Colombian Conchita as Austrian Tom's refuge from his fear of the homeland, then, Neuwirth/Wurst stands as a defiant reversal of dominant Western discourses that inscribe 'border figures' and 'trans-type figures'—as they are variously sexed, gendered, sexualized, racialized, nationalized, and civilizationalized—as anarchical dangers in/ to all manner of binary logics. These binary logics include the primary logic of traditional statecraft—order versus anarchy. Furthermore, by fashioning Conchita as a 'transborder figure' who travels from the 'savage Hispanic-mestizo civilization' that is the legacy of imperial Spain to 'civilized Europe', Tom puts Conchita's (and Tom's and Neuwirth/Wurst's) sexes, genders, sexualities, races, nationalities, and civilizations on the move from the global South to the 'European' homeland. In so doing, this 'Eurovisioned bearded drag queen' not only grates against the unnatural border between 'proper Europeanness' and 'less proper Europeanness', he/she/they also threaten to bring 'the violence of the world we live in *at the heart of the home* [and, I would add, at the heart of the homeland], at the heart of the national self' (Fortier 2008, 60; also see Ahmed 2000; Salecl 2004, 24; Žižek 1998; and see chapter 4 on the unwanted im/migrant), even as it makes Conchita's 'rise like a phoenix' as 'European' at Eurovision possible.

Overall, then, Neuwirth/Wurst as a pluralized *and/or* figure combats homophobia, but not just by replacing traditional homophobic fears of 'homosexuality' and the 'homosexual' with tolerance and an appreciation of difference. For Neuwirth/Wurst's strategy to combat traditional homophobia is rooted in his/her/their demand for an acknowledgment of another type of homophobia—fear in the 'homosexual' of the homeland. It is because of this demand that Neuwirth/Wurst puts sexes, genders, and sexualities *as well as* nationality, race, and civilization on the move in order to create Conchita as a transnational, transracial, transcivilizational refuge from homophobia for Tom and other victims of all manner of phobias, including homophobia, over variances in sexes, genders, and sexualities. This appears to be why Neuwirth/Wurst crosses spatial and temporal binaries as well as religious and secular boundaries to constitute himself/herself/themselves as a phoenix rising from the ashes of

'European' homophobia with the authority to seek vengeance on behalf of a wide array of 'transborder figures'.

It is as a triple trinity around authority, nationality, and race that necessarily expresses itself through sexes, genders, and sexualities that Neuwirth/Wurst becomes available to 'Europe' as a potential plural logoi of a queer 'European' statecraft as mancraft, upon whom a queerly imagined 'integrated Europe' might be grounded. For Neuwirth/Wurst both embraces and pushes beyond traditional understandings of sovereignty in the vertical and horizontal terms 'European' integrationists have long desired (Walker 2000). As a 'transborder figure' embodying both the possibilities and the impossibilities of integration, Neuwirth/Wurst is the queer guarantor of the vertical 'Great Chain of Being' between Christian godly and earthly authority and is the 'transnational/racial/civilizational' figure who queerly extends the horizontal reach(es) of 'the European homeland itself'. In so doing, Neuwirth/Wurst becomes a figure through whom a thorough rethinking of what the process of 'European integration' might mean and what a sovereign 'integrated Europe' might be becomes possible.

This is not to say that Neuwirth/Wurst's figuration of the 'Eurovisioned bearded drag queen' is unproblematic. A critical reading of Neuwirth/Wurst's figuration might point to Neuwirth/Wurst as (yet another) colonialist appropriation and/or 'tropicalist' appropriation (Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman 1997; also see Amar 2011)¹⁶ of race through the performance of brownface,¹⁷ culture through the performance of Colombianness, and exotic femininity through the performance of the hyperfeminized and disruptively masculinized 'bearded lady'.¹⁸ It would also note that trans* people bear the burden of the backlash against 'the artistic character' Conchita Wurst, whereas 'the private person' Tom Neuwirth who does not identify as trans* can escape much this trans*phobia in his everyday life (Baker 2014a; also see Northup 2014). My point here, then, is neither to celebrate nor condemn Neuwirth/Wurst's complex figuration. Instead, my point is to underscore how Neuwirth/Wurst as a 'transborder figure' offers a queer (while still problematic and certainly not feminist) challenge to traditional understandings of 'European integration' and of a

‘simple sovereign man’ (Soto 2010, 3–4) as the foundation of a (simply) sovereign ‘integrated Europe’.

It is my argument that this queer challenge to rethink integration and ‘an integrated Europe itself’ is only possible by utilizing the lens of a queer logic of statecraft, which appreciates the multiple pluralities Neuwirth/Wurst’s queer *and/or* figuration crafts and mobilizes. Yet this is not how ‘European’ leaders engaged with Neuwirth/Wurst. Whether to embrace Neuwirth/Wurst or to oppose him/her/them, ‘European’ leaders instead uniformly insisted upon inserting Neuwirth/Wurst into familiar *either/or* logics of statecraft as mancraft, in which Neuwirth/Wurst had to stand for *either* one thing *or* another in all of his/her/their many registers. It is to these readings of Neuwirth/Wurst through the binary logics of traditional statecraft as mancraft that I now turn.

Neuwirth/Wurst as *Either* the ‘Normal Homosexual’
or the ‘Perverse Homosexual’

Who is the ‘homosexual’ Tom Neuwirth and/as the bearded drag queen Conchita Wurst? What type of ‘(homo)sexuality’ and what type of relationship to ‘(homo)sexuality’ does Neuwirth/Wurst figure for ‘an integrated Europe’?

These questions framed ‘European’ debates about Neuwirth/Wurst before, during and after the 2014 Eurovision Song Contest. How they framed ‘European’ debates was by engaging with Neuwirth/Wurst as a figure who was knowable and placeable in relation to dichotomous understandings of space, time, and desire along axes of sex, gender, sexuality, race, geopolitics, and religious and secular narratives of authority. It was by mobilizing the *either/or* logic through which these terms were made to operate that some ‘European’ leaders attempted to impose and stabilize their account of Neuwirth/Wurst as a proposed sovereign logos of ‘European’ statecraft as mancraft.

While ‘European’ leaders explicitly disagreed over the ‘true nature’ of Neuwirth/Wurst, they implicitly agreed that Neuwirth/Wurst had a true,

singular, ahistorical nature. They agreed, in other words, that Neuwirth/Wurst was *either* normal *or* perverse. And because Neuwirth/Wurst's true nature was performed at Eurovision, they further agreed that Neuwirth/Wurst's true nature was connected to (or possibly stood for) 'integrated Europe itself'. For these 'European' leaders, deciding the proper course for 'European' integration seemed to be as simple as deciding upon the true character of Neuwirth/Wurst as a proposed logos of an 'integrated Europe'. And the true character of Neuwirth/Wurst, it seemed, could be revealed by simply deciding if this 'homosexual' and the forms of sex, gender, and '(homo)sexuality' he/she/they championed were normal or perverse.

In the remainder of this section, I detail how this *either/or* logic of a 'European' statecraft as mancraft attempted to stabilize Neuwirth/Wurst as *either* a normal *or* a perverse potential logos of an 'integrated Europe' by addressing the question: How did dichotomous understandings of space, time, and desire function to make Neuwirth/Wurst knowable and placeable, as/in relation to 'an integrated Europe'? To answer this question, I begin by tracing how some 'European' leaders figured Neuwirth/Wurst as the 'perverse homosexual' before I examine how other 'European' leaders figured Neuwirth/Wurst as the 'normal homosexual'.

NEUWIRTH/WURST AS THE 'PERVERSE HOMOSEXUAL'

Before, during, and after Eurovision 2014, Neuwirth/Wurst divided 'European' opinion. Some widely circulated comments by mostly Eastern European leaders (especially from Russia¹⁹ and the Balkans) figured Neuwirth/Wurst as 'perverse', while some widely circulated comments by mostly Western European leaders figured Neuwirth/Wurst as 'normal'. Some people took this as evidence of an East versus West divide over Neuwirth/Wurst as a figure who stood for unorthodox types of integration, including 'European integration itself'. Yet an East versus West dichotomy is insufficient to explain how coalitions formed around Neuwirth/Wurst and his/her/their meaning in relation to 'Europe itself'. This is for two primary reasons.

First, some 'Western European' leaders embraced denunciations of Neuwirth/Wurst as perverse (integration). For these 'Western European'

leaders, this opposition was rooted in their political, social, and religious conservatism, as the most vocally opposed to Neuwirth/Wurst were all located on the far right of the ‘Western European’ political spectrum. For ‘Eastern European’ leaders, this opposition was rooted in this same conservatism. Yet it was also rooted in how ‘Eastern Europeans’ had historically experienced post–Cold War ‘European integration’ as a Western bloc political project to contain Eastern bloc territorial expansion in ‘Europe’ and as a Western bloc economic strategy to foster capitalism in a postwar ‘Europe’ presented with a communist alternative. At the time of Eurovision 2014, ‘European integration’ was perceived by especially far-right Russian leaders as an attempt to (further) isolate Russia in (relation to) ‘Europe’ by wooing an increasing number of (former) Eastern bloc states into the EU, including Ukraine.

For an array of complicated reasons, then, Neuwirth/Wurst united many far-right ‘European’ leaders in the new ‘culture wars’ in ‘Europe.’ As Alina Polyakova explains,

In the renewed culture war between Western social liberalism and Eastern traditional conservatism for which Conchita Wurst has become a symbol, Europe’s far-right parties have stood with the Russians. In its party program, Austria’s FPÖ defines family as “a partnership between a man and woman with common children.” UKIP’s Nigel Farage has said that gay marriage in France was unnecessary. (Polyakova 2014)

What further united many of these ‘European’ conservatives is their embrace of Vladimir Putin’s mobilization of ‘culture’ to argue in favor of national sovereignty as opposed to European integration, especially around issues of monetary policy and immigration. For example, the de facto spokesperson for the ‘European’ far-right French ultranationalist leader Marine Le Pen ‘hailed Russia’s president as a true patriot and defender of European values’, describing him as ‘a defender of “the Christian heritage of European civilization”’ (Polyakova 2014). Yet, importantly, even the ‘European’ Far Right was split over Neuwirth/Wurst. As Polyakova notes,

'Geert Wilders, leader of the Dutch Party for Freedom, styles himself as a promoter of gay rights, which he sees as in line with traditional Dutch values' (Polyakova 2014).

Second, just as Neuwirth/Wurst divided opinion among 'European' leaders, so too did Neuwirth/Wurst divide populations within 'European' states. This was evident in Eastern Europe, where the Russian Eurovision voting public favored Neuwirth/Wurst and the state-appointed Russian Eurovision jury opposed Neuwirth/Wurst (Rosenberg 2014; Renwick 2014). It was also evident in Western Europe, where the United Kingdom's previous long-standing Eurovision presenter Terry Wogan claimed Neuwirth/Wurst's bearded lady transformed Eurovision into a 'freak show' (Wogan 2014) while the UK Eurovision voting public placed Neuwirth/Wurst high in their rankings.

For these reasons, it is incorrect to reify some 'Eastern Europe' opposed to some 'Western Europe', some 'right-wing Europe' opposed to some 'liberal Europe' or any specific 'European' nation-state and its presumed attitudes about Neuwirth/Wurst, wherever it is located in (relations to) 'Europe'. In this section, then, I am less interested in which kind of 'European' spoke for or against Neuwirth/Wurst than I am in how comments made by variously figured 'European' leaders specifically figured Neuwirth/Wurst as *either* normal *or* perverse. While these terms—like any others—are wholly inadequate, I use the terms 'mostly Eastern European leaders' and 'mostly Western European leaders' when describing those who the press identified as primarily responsible for the statements I will go on to analyze.

The question mostly Eastern European leaders publically posed about Neuwirth/Wurst was this: *Is* this Eurovisioned figure properly integrated, *can* this Eurovisioned figure be properly integrated, and *should* this Eurovisioned figure be properly integrated socially, politically, and religiously in/as 'Europe itself'? As leaders who identified as anti-'European' integrationist politicians and as traditional Christian religious leaders, their answers were unsurprisingly no, no, and definitely not. This was because the kind of *and/or* unity Neuwirth/Wurst stood for did not accord with what they considered to be proper binary understandings of

sex, gender, sexuality, race, nationality, civilization, and authority. These leaders did not try to ‘appreciate the plural’ logics (Barthes 1974, 5) that made Neuwirth/Wurst meaningful in/to ‘Europe’. Rather—and quite importantly—they reduced Neuwirth/Wurst’s pluralities to some presumably unified understanding of ‘the perverse’, opposed it to their presumably unified understanding of ‘the normal’, and set themselves up as the champions of the ‘traditional’, ‘normal’ values that Neuwirth/Wurst threatened in/as ‘Europe itself’.

They did this by casting Neuwirth/Wurst as a new ‘alien strain’ of the ‘perverse homosexual’ that threatened the purity of humanity. For example, Bulgarian MEP candidate Angel Dzhambazki remarked, ‘This bearded creature, called with the European name Conchita Wurst is like genetically modified organism and won the Eurovision. And I wonder, if the vice of our time is that we tolerate the perversity. I don’t want such a song contest for my children’ (Kosharevska 2014). As a ‘bearded creature’ beyond nature and natural reproduction, Neuwirth/Wurst as Conchita Wurst was also spoken of as beyond sex, as in Russian nationalist politician Vladimir Zhirinovskiy’s observation, ‘They don’t have men and women any more. They have “it”’ (Davies 2014). Neuwirth/Wurst is also figured as a perversion of the sacred connection between the Christian God and the saintly bearded lady. For example, the Russian Orthodox Church referred to Conchita Wurst as ‘an abomination’, claiming that her victory was ‘one more step in the rejection of Christian identity of European culture’ (quoted in Edgar 2014). Holding Conchita Wurst responsible for the post-Eurovision floods in the Balkans, Patriarch Amfilohije of Montenegro claimed, ‘God sent the rains as a reminder that people should not join the wild side’ (Telegraph Foreign Staff 2014). And Bulgarian ultranationalist VMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) member Krasimir Karakachanov declared that ‘the symbol of Europe must be Joan of Arc, and not Conchita Wurst’ (Pitt 2014).²⁰ As a perversion of the ‘Great Chain of Being’ between God and man, then, Neuwirth/Wurst on these readings is neither a route to Christian redemption nor a figure with any redemptive qualities himself/herself/themselves.

Russian president Vladimir Putin combined these ideas in his post-Eurovision comments about Neuwirth/Wurst, stating:

The Bible talks about the two genders, man and woman, and the main purpose of union between them is to produce children. . . . For us it is important to reaffirm traditional values. . . . I personally am very liberal (on matters of personal morality). People have the right to live their lives the way they want. But they should not be aggressive, or put it up for show. (Edgar 2014)

These statements suggest that what offend these 'European' leaders is how Neuwirth/Wurst threatens to replace the traditional family—understood as white, heterosexual, bourgeois, cisgendered, and Christian—as the proper engine of (non)biological and social reproduction. Neuwirth/Wurst does this by 'aggressively' putting on a show of his/her/their genetically modified alien perverse desires as if they expressed legitimate ways to be and to live in the world. In so doing, these leaders infer, Neuwirth/Wurst can be understood as recruiting vulnerable children into 'perverse homosexuality' through a kind of mimetic reproduction (i.e., a form of asexual reproduction that births new 'deviants' by enticing 'the innocent' to imitate 'the perverse').

If this form of asexual reproduction sounds familiar, it is because it is akin to the type of reproduction Western discourses suggest the 'al-Qaeda terrorist' uses to reproduce terrorist cells (as discussed in chapter 4). By symbolizing this sort of 'deviant' mimetic reproduction, then, Neuwirth/Wurst functions in the rhetoric of these 'European' leaders as a kind of civilizational barbarian who can never—and indeed is not meant to—sustain the traditional Christian family. Temporally, this figures Neuwirth/Wurst as beyond the bounds of Christian eschatological time (which these traditionalists claim to respect) and beyond the bounds of proper modern developmental time (which these traditionalists tie to a respect for Christian traditions). By perverting both God's time and man's time, Neuwirth/Wurst strays from two temporal trajectories at once—the Christian path to redemption and the earthly path to development. Because of his/her/

their simultaneous religious and secular failures, then, Neuwirth/Wurst is figured as the ‘irredeemable undevelopable’. This makes Neuwirth/Wurst a threat to the (Christian) Malthusian couple and to the Parsonian family. This may explain why Angel Dzhambazki in an interview about Conchita Wurst commented, ‘The resolution for the human rights of the third gender is absolutely an unacceptable targeting of humanity against nature’ (Kosharevska 2014).

This also makes Neuwirth/Wurst a threat to the nation, to ‘European civilization’, and to ‘Europe itself’. For as we saw in chapter 3, traditional Western discourses on the family ground the future of the nation, the civilization, and the region upon the future of the family. For it is the traditional family that ensures biological *as well as social and political reproduction* by birthing, rearing, and educating children. Neuwirth/Wurst is not only denied any legitimate roles in these processes, but understood as perverting these processes as an ‘abomination’ of both nature and culture. This may explain why Vladimir Zhirinovskiy proclaimed about Neuwirth/Wurst, ‘It’s the end of Europe. It has turned wild. . . . Fifty years ago the Soviet army occupied Austria. We made a mistake in freeing Austria. We should have stayed’ (Davies 2014).

Zhirinovskiy’s comment suggests another figuration of the ‘perverse homosexual’ lurking in these commentaries about Neuwirth/Wurst—the figure of the ‘unwanted im/migrant’. For what Zhirinovskiy seems to be objecting to is not just how the ‘underdeveloped’ or even ‘undevelopable’ Austria has presumably succumbed to perversion since being liberated from Soviet occupation but also how the (now cultural) conquest of ‘Europe’ has been moving from West to East, carrying perversion with it. This sentiment comes through in a petition that the All-Russian Parent Meeting organized prior to Eurovision 2014 in its attempt to prevent ‘the transvestite contestant Conchita Wurst, who leads the lifestyle inapplicable for Russians’ from being broadcast on Russian television. In its petition (which collected fifteen thousand signatures), it requested ‘that the state broadcaster remove Eurovision from its TV schedule, accusing “European liberals” of subjecting their children to a “hotbed of sodomy”’ (Edgar 2014). Through this petition, Neuwirth/Wurst as Conchita Wurst

is cast as the 'unwanted im/migrant' who televisually and morally puts the 'European liberal' condoning of sodomy on the move from perverse Austria into normal Russia. This is how Neuwirth/Wurst as undevelopable sexes, genders, and sexualities on the move threatens to bring televisual dangers into the heart of the Russian/'European' homeland. Upon winning Eurovision, Neuwirth/Wurst declared, 'I would like to spend a week with Putin, so that I could better understand him' (Molloy 2014). This statement both reverses who the incomprehensible creature lurking about 'Europe' is (from Neuwirth/Wurst to Putin) and threatens to put Neuwirth/Wurst himself/herself/themselves on the move materially from perverse Austria into normal Russia.

In all of these ways, Neuwirth/Wurst is figured by some mostly Eastern European leaders as an alien strain of the 'perverse homosexual' who takes specific form as versions of the 'irredeemable undevelopable', the 'civilizational barbarian', and the 'unwanted im/migrant' in order to corrupt children, the family, the home, the homeland, and Christian theology by putting 'perverse' sexes, genders, and sexualities on the move both horizontally and vertically. Horizontally, Neuwirth/Wurst moves televisually, morally, and potentially even physically from 'Western Europe' into 'Eastern Europe'. Vertically, Neuwirth/Wurst interjects himself/herself/themselves as a mobile queer link in the 'Great Chain of Being' between God and man. In light of this figuration of Neuwirth/Wurst as perverse, it is not surprising that far-right anti-integration 'Europeans' like Russian deputy prime minister Dmitry Rogozin claimed that Conchita Wurst and her Eurovision victory 'showed supporters of European integration their European future: a bearded girl' (Davies 2014).

As a sinner against the laws of God and man—nature and culture—it is this particular figuration of the 'perverse homosexual' as this specific 'bearded girl' who presents himself/herself/themselves as a potential singular logos of 'European' statecraft as mancraft. It is this 'bearded girl' who is available to underwrite the sovereign authority of individual and integrated 'European' nation-states horizontally and vertically as unstoppable unity. It is this 'bearded girl' whom these 'European' leaders reject.

To avoid the perverse fate this figuration of Neuwirth/Wurst offers to ‘Europe itself’, these ‘European’ leaders and their followers strenuously reaffirm the binaries between male and female, masculine and feminine, heterosexual and ‘homosexual’, religious authority and secular authority, traditional ‘Europe’ and liberal ‘Europe’, and family-friendly television and ‘the hotbed of sodomy’ that is Eurovision. We see this not only in the statements analyzed above, but in Russian legislator Vitaly Milonov’s proposal to boycott Eurovision in the future and replace it with a Russian-hosted alternative Eurasian song contest (Kozlov 2015). We also see it in the ‘prove you are not Conchita’ beard-shaving Twitter campaign that swept through Russia after Neuwirth/Wurst’s Eurovision victory.²¹ This is a gesture that echoes particularly Western Islamophobic fears of the beard globally after 9/11 and Russian fears of the beard nationally in the context of Russia’s wars with Chechnya. What it suggests is that for a Russian to ‘prove you are not Conchita’, he must paradoxically demasculinize himself by exposing his facial skin in order to reaffirm his whiteness, his Christianity, and his civilizational ‘Europeanness’, all of which support his ‘European’ gender identity on *either* one side *or* the other of a traditional binary.²² This is how racialization, nationalization, and civilization creep into these figurations of Neuwirth/Wurst as perverse, which are generally read only through the lens of sexes, genders, and sexualities.

By reducing Neuwirth/Wurst’s *and/or* plurality around sexes, genders, sexualities, and authority to a specific, singular figuration of the ‘perverse homosexual’ and opposing it to some presumably ‘traditional, normal European’, these ‘European’ leaders figured Neuwirth/Wurst as the border between their vision of some ‘normal Europe’ and some ‘perverse Europe’ that accorded with Neuwirth/Wurst’s perverse (non)biological, social, and political understanding of unstoppable unity. In so doing, they participated in what Anzaldúa calls a bordering practice. As she puts it, ‘Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge’ (1987, 3). Neuwirth/Wurst functioned in this discourse to separate us from them, the safe from the unsafe, the normal from the perverse. And what made that possible was Neuwirth/Wurst’s figuration as the ‘perverse homosexual’.

NEUWIRTH/WURST AS THE 'NORMAL HOMOSEXUAL'

What I want to suggest in the remainder of this section is that bordering practices are also very much at play in crafting Neuwirth/Wurst as the 'normal homosexual' and that these bordering practices are—albeit very differently—just as objectionable. These bordering practices function by celebrating Neuwirth/Wurst's *and/or* plurality in the registers of sexes, genders, and sexualities so long as it can be recuperated within a whitened, Europeanized homonormativity. In other words, Neuwirth/Wurst is figured here as a variation of Hilary Clinton's 'LGBT', as discussed in chapter 5. It is Neuwirth/Wurst as this particular 'normal homosexual' who was championed by mostly Western European leaders, placed on a 'normal' versus 'perverse' binary, and opposed to those mostly Eastern European understandings of Neuwirth/Wurst as the 'perverse homosexual' analyzed earlier. My argument is that Western European (and later world leaders) were able to celebrate Neuwirth/Wurst's 'unstoppable unity' as a potential logos of statecraft as mancraft for 'Europe itself' and later for a particular globalized 'human community' only because they occluded specific aspects of Neuwirth/Wurst's complex figuration from that unity. Those aspects are race, nationality, and civilization.

This is evident in both Neuwirth/Wurst's ever-changing biographical profile that Neuwirth/Wurst or his/her/their publicists circulated on Neuwirth/Wurst's behalf and in the statements 'European' and then United Nations leaders made about Neuwirth/Wurst. My analysis focuses on Neuwirth/Wurst's biographies by examining the implications of three key biographies in particular—the September 2013 biography, the May 2014 biography, and the November 2014 biography.

After his/her/their selection in September 2013 as Austria's representative to Eurovision 2014, this official biography of Conchita Wurst appeared (hereafter referred to as the 2013 bio).

Conchita Wurst grew up in the Colombian highlands surrounded by the sound of swinging powder puffs and the rustling of layers made out of delicate tulle. One day her mother, a popular actress,

met by fate her father, Alfred of Knack and Wurst, an even more successful theatre director—and fell in love with him. Within that same year she gave birth to her first daughter Conchita, named after the great-grandmother BarbadaConchita (the Bearded). It soon became obvious that the small “Knackwurst” was determined to become someone great and successful. (Konstantopoulos 2013)

Sometime in the run-up to Eurovision 2014, *conchitawurst.com* offered the two separate biographies of Tom and Conchita (hereafter the May 2014 bio), which are reproduced above. These biographies—which describe Tom as Austrian and Conchita as ‘born in the mountains of Colombia’ and ‘raised in Germany’—appeared on *conchitawurst.com* until at least mid-November 2014, shortly after Neuwirth/Wurst’s appearances as Conchita Wurst at the European Parliament in Brussels (October 2014) and at the United Nations (November 2014).

By December 2014, the bios had been modified to read as follows (hereafter the December 2014 bio):

Tom was born on November 6, 1988 in Gmunden, Austria and grew up in the small Styrian village of Mitterndorf. In 2007 he participates in the ORF casting show “Starmania” and takes the second place. In 2011 he completes his studies at the Fashion School in Graz, Austria and has been living in Vienna since then.

Conchita made her first public appearance on the ORF casting show “Die große Chance” in 2011. In 2012 she participates in the Austrian qualifying round for the Eurovision Song Contest and takes the second place again. 2014 is about to become her most successful year to date: Conchita wins the Eurovision Song Contest in Copenhagen and captivates European and worldwide audiences. She is finally at the top—all over Europe!²³

Accompanying all of these bios is a strong statement in support of tolerance, especially the tolerance of sex/gender/sexual variance, as suggested by the colloquial translation of Wurst—‘It’s all the same.’

I'm fighting for tolerance every day.²⁴

Conchita, The Bearded Lady, [is] as a statement. A statement for tolerance and acceptance—as it's not about appearances; it's about the human being (May 2014 bio).

[Tom and Conchita] . . . both take a strong stance for tolerance and against discrimination (December 2014 bio).

Read closely, these official biographies reveal several things. First, the biographies circulated by Neuwirth/Wurst's team become less flamboyant as Neuwirth/Wurst becomes more famous. Well before Eurovision 2014, Conchita Wurst is described as being raised 'surrounded by the sound of swinging powder puffs and the rustling of layers made out of delicate tulle'. Once Neuwirth/Wurst was firmly on the way to fulfilling Conchita's ambition 'to become someone great and successful', her May 2014 biography drops its flowery prose, in favor of presenting 'just the facts' about Tom and Conchita as bullet points. This same 'just the facts' presentation of Tom's and Conchita's bios is also evident in the December 2014 bio, although it has reverted to prose.

Second, 'the facts' about Conchita change from her 2013 bio to her May 2014 bio. The 2013 bio claims Conchita 'grew up in the Colombian highlands'. But the May 2014 bio claims Conchita was 'born in the mountains of Colombia and raised in Germany'. As the bios relocate Conchita's rearing from Colombia to Germany—the powerhouse of contemporary 'Europe'—they sharply shift tone from flamboyant to factual. Together, these revisions invite a reading of Colombia as an exotic global Southern locale that produces fully foreign fantastical creatures. This is opposed to matter-of-fact global Northern 'European' Germany, which seems to be a place in which 'the exotic' is tamed. In Conchita's case, this taming is evidenced by the instrumentalizing of her exotic origins into a formal bullet-pointed CV. This move maintains Conchita as 'the exotic global Southerner'. But it figures her as not so exotic that 'Europeans' cannot identify with her. For she shares with them not just their documentary form of exchanging professional details; she also shares their 'European' upbringing. Indeed, she shares Tom's 'European' upbringing—a fact that is missing from the 2013

bio. It is this ‘European’ upbringing that might explain Conchita’s success in ‘Europe’, as evidenced by her May 2014 bio, which notes her appearances on Austria’s *Die große Chance* and her participation in Eurovision. It is also this fact that makes Conchita eligible to compete in Eurovision.

Third, the ‘fact’ that Tom and Conchita share a common ‘European’ upbringing is missing from Conchita’s 2013 bio because Tom is missing from Neuwirth/Wurst’s bios until 2014. On the version of the biography page of *conchitawurst.com* that was available in May 2014, Tom is described as ‘a private person’ who has never met his creation, the ‘art figure’ Conchita Wurst, even though they share the same body. Tom’s biography changes little once it is introduced. No facts change—Tom is figured from May 2014 onward as Austrian, ‘European’, presumptively white, male, cisgendered, and homosexual. However, Tom’s bios do change in style, matching the stylistic changes of Conchita’s bios. And a few additional details about Tom appear in his bios as they are revised between May 2014 and December 2014.

This, fourth, is in stark contrast to Conchita’s bios. For each subsequent biography of Neuwirth/Wurst is increasingly economical with ‘the facts’ about Conchita. In addition to how ‘the facts’ about Conchita’s upbringing change in the September 2013 and May 2014 bios, details about Conchita herself are erased with every rewriting of the bios. In the September 2013 bio, for example, readers are told that Conchita was ‘named after the great-grandmother BarbadaConchita (the Bearded)’. This information establishes Conchita’s gender variance as a biological attribute of her matriarchal Colombian lineage. The May 2014 bio of Conchita deletes this genealogical information. In this bio, Conchita is merely figured as ‘born in the mountains of Colombia and raised in Germany’. But by the time the November 2014 bio is released, even this information is missing. For this bio is simply a CV of Conchita’s professional accomplishments presented in prose form. It gestures toward the September 2013 bio’s foreshadowing of Conchita’s success when it writes of Conchita’s Eurovision victory, ‘She is finally at the top—all over Europe!’ But any explicit connection between Conchita and Colombia—through family genealogy, place of birth, or place of rearing—has disappeared.

What should we make of these changes to Neuwirth/Wurst's biographies?

On the one hand, the accumulating omissions from Conchita's backstory might make Neuwirth/Wurst's figuration of Conchita less contestable. For they obscure how Neuwirth/Wurst appropriates stereotypical global Northern understandings of race, place, sexes, genders, and sexualities to create his/her/their exotic (for some), monstrous (for others) global Southern hyperfeminized and disruptively masculinized 'art figure'. In so doing, Neuwirth/Wurst's bios appear to be less neocolonialist and tropicalist in global terms. Indeed, by the final bio Conchita's Spanish name can be read as figuring her as a global Northern Spaniard rather than a global Southern Colombian. Yet while this bio invites a reading of Conchita as fully 'European', it merely substitutes global Northern stereotypes about the global Southern 'Hispanic' with equally contestable 'Northern European' stereotypes about the racialized, sexed, gendered, and sexualized 'Southern European'. In so doing, it preserves 'Europe' as a signifier of 'Enlightened development' as opposed to Latin and South America as a space of 'un-Enlightened un(der)development'. And it still does nothing to address concerns about how Neuwirth/Wurst's transfiguration might negatively affect those people who live their everyday lives as 'mixed race' and/or as trans* in relation to the often violent visual regimes of normative 'Europeanness'.²⁵ While these omissions, then, might make Conchita Wurst more palatable as a symbol of tolerance to some 'Europeans', they hardly make her a 'politically correct' figure.

On the other hand, the accumulating omissions from Conchita's backstory effect the kind of tolerance Conchita and Tom symbolize. This is because as Conchita's backstory is edited out of existence, so too is some of Tom's backstory. Tom remains a figure who was discriminated against because of his 'homosexuality' as a teenager, and Conchita remains his artistic expression for tolerance and against discrimination. Yet the types of tolerance and antidiscrimination Tom and Conchita stand for narrow as Conchita's bio narrows. This is because the editing out of Conchita's Colombian backstory edits out both Neuwirth/Wurst's complex crossing of race, nation, and civilization and Tom's motivation for creating this

particular sex-/gender-/sexuality-variant character as his refuge from one of his *specific experiences* of homophobia—the fear in the ‘homosexual’ of the ‘European’ homeland. This means that Neuwirth/Wurst as Tom *and/or* Conchita stands against discrimination and for tolerance only as whitened, Europeanized subjects and only in the first two registers of homophobia discussed above—as fear of the ‘homosexual’ and as fear in the ‘homosexual’ of the home—but not in the third register, as fear in the ‘homosexual’ of the homeland.

This could not be more significant for several reasons. First, by spatially renationalizing Neuwirth/Wurst within the ‘Western European homeland’, Neuwirth/Wurst’s victory at Eurovision 2014 becomes a temporal tale that evidences increasing tolerance in the ‘white Western European’ of sexed, gendered, and sexualized variance at the expense of its tolerance for racial, national, and civilizational differences.

Second, only two kinds of homophobia that Tom was exposed to as a teenager appear in this tale, and they are firmly located in Tom’s past. What Neuwirth/Wurst’s victory at Eurovision 2014 demonstrates is that in contemporary ‘white Western Europe’, these forms of homophobia have largely given way to tolerance. Taken together, these first two points allows ‘white Western Europeans’ to embrace Neuwirth/Wurst as a celebration of their own progress in expanding the range of ‘the normal’ to include a figure who they would have previously read as ‘the perverse’, while preserving all manner of (crossed) racialized, nationalized, and civilizationalized figures as perverse. If these moves sound familiar, it is because they are the very same moves Secretary of State Hilary Clinton made in her ‘Gay rights are human rights’ speech to figure the ‘LGBT’ as normal.

Third, these moves further allow ‘Western Europeans’ to criticize those predominately ‘Eastern European’ leaders who insist upon condemning Neuwirth/Wurst and other ‘homosexuals’ as perverse. What this means, then, is that—like those ‘Eastern European’ leaders discussed above—many ‘Western Europeans’ embraced Neuwirth/Wurst not as the ‘normal *and/or* perverse homosexual’ but as the ‘new normal homosexual’, whom they valued over and opposed to readings of Neuwirth/Wurst

as the 'perverse homosexual'. This figures those 'Western Europeans' who embrace Neuwirth/Wurst as the 'developed' and those 'Eastern Europeans' who revile Neuwirth/Wurst as the 'undevelopable'.

Fourth, the *either/or* logics that produce this particularly white Western 'normal homosexual' make it available as a potential logos of 'the newly tolerant (white Western) Europe' in a 'European' statecraft as mancraft. But, just as with every 'homosexual' in an *either/or* logic of statecraft as mancraft, the plurality of Neuwirth/Wurst's *and/or* figurations had to be reduced to *either* one thing *or* another for Neuwirth/Wurst to function in this logic. As noted above, to craft Neuwirth/Wurst as the 'perverse homosexual', mostly Eastern European leaders had to reduce all of Neuwirth/Wurst's plurality to 'the perverse'. To craft Neuwirth/Wurst as the 'normal homosexual', mostly Western Europeans had to contain how Neuwirth/Wurst performed 'transness'. 'Transness' could not be performed in the register of transnationality outside of a 'European' context. As a result, it could not be performed in the register of transraciality outside of a 'European' context. And it could not be performed in the register of biological genealogy outside of a 'European' context.

Once all of these aspects of Neuwirth/Wurst's transperformativity are stripped away, so too is the fictitious explanation for Neuwirth/Wurst's sex/gender/sexuality variance—Conchita's resemblance to her Colombian great-grandmother BarbadaConchita. Uprooted from Colombia, Conchita is unrooted from her beard. Conchita's beard—like Neuwirth/Wurst's beard—is but a detachable accessory in the drag queen's kit. This, I want to suggest, makes Neuwirth/Wurst as Conchita Wurst all the more powerful, particularly in this mostly Western European tale of his/her/their normalization. For as a detachable accessory,²⁶ Conchita's beard is less like a unique gift from God to the sainted 'bearded lady' to protect her from patriarchal culture than it is an object that can be shared by all of those who 'oppose openly and resolutely, with daring or with effrontery' (OED) the two types of homophobia Neuwirth/Wurst stands against. Indeed, around Eurovision 2014, fans of Neuwirth/Wurst donned Conchita-like beards, just as her detractors shaved off their beards to prove they were not Conchita.

The significance of the unrootedness of Conchita's beard goes far beyond its appropriation or rejection in the world of fandom. For as a man-made object available to all rather than a biological attribute gifted from God to someone exceptional, Conchita's beard does not situate Neuwirth/Wurst in the 'Great Chain of Being' between God and man. Rather, Conchita's beard smashes this hierarchical understanding of sovereign authority to the ground. It is out of the ashes of this traditional, conservatively Christian vertical configuration of old Europe that Neuwirth/Wurst as Conchita Wurst rises like a phoenix as a secular symbol of a newly tolerant Europe that answers to no higher legal or moral authority than 'modern man'. The classical understanding of 'sovereign man' as the logos of the old Europe is the intolerant flame that spurs on Neuwirth/Wurst to seek retribution. Neuwirth/Wurst does so in the name not only of the 'homosexual' and 'the sex/gender/sexuality variant' but also of humanity itself. The horizontal inclusion of all people in the human community is the fundamental axis of integration that matters in this account of Neuwirth/Wurst. This is the 'unstoppable unity'—of the majoritized and the minoritized—this secularly regrounded figuration of Neuwirth/Wurst symbolizes.²⁷

This figuration of Neuwirth/Wurst as unstoppable unity accords perfectly with Enlightenment accounts of modern sovereignty, whether on behalf of an integrated 'European community' or on behalf of a global community. For once Neuwirth/Wurst was extracted out of Christian eschatological time and fully inserted in the progressive temporality of modernity, Neuwirth/Wurst became available to signify man's progress on earth, including in terms of integration. This explains why Neuwirth/Wurst was invited to the EU to perform as Conchita Wurst and was celebrated as having 'a very important political message that . . . has to do with what the EU stands for: Equal rights, fundamental rights, the right to live your life without fear, for LGBT and other minorities' (Austrian Green MEP Ulrike Lunacek, quoted in EurActiv 2014). This also explains why the same invitation was made to Neuwirth/Wurst as Conchita Wurst by the United Nations, where Neuwirth/Wurst met with UN secretary

general Ban Ki-Moon. Speaking of Neuwirth/Wurst's meeting with Ban Ki-Moon, Ban's spokesperson commented,

Everyone is entitled to enjoy the same basic rights and live a life of worth and dignity without discrimination. This fundamental principle is embedded in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Conchita is a symbol in that sense and I think it's good for them to meet. [The meeting allows us] to reassert his [Ban Ki-Moon's] support for LGBT people and for them to ensure that they enjoy the same human rights and protection that we all do. (Duffy 2014)

But, of course, Neuwirth/Wurst does not stand for all humanity in these *either/or* logics of collective statecraft as mancraft. Neuwirth/Wurst, like the liberally crafted tolerated 'LGBT', stands for a specific national, racial, and civilizational figuration of the human.

Had Neuwirth/Wurst as Conchita Wurst not been constrained within the specific national, racial, and civilizational limits of what it means to be 'European' and what it means to be human, the modernist progressive normalizing narrative especially 'Western Europeans' tell themselves about Neuwirth/Wurst could not have been sustained. For the story a Colombian Conchita tells us about the 'European homosexual' Tom is that what it takes for the 'homosexual' to be at home in 'Europe' is to take refuge in an alter ego who lives somewhere else. For Tom, that 'somewhere else' is the fantasy space of Colombia that acts as the stage upon which his art creation Conchita—as a figure detached from Tom's everyday life and 'European' everyday life—can perform.²⁸ This Neuwirth/Wurst does not fully belong to/in 'Europe', which means this Neuwirth/Wurst would become an even less likely candidate to become a sovereign foundation for 'a new Europe' or a progressively 'integrating Europe'. Instead, this Neuwirth/Wurst's 'unity' is 'unstoppable' because his/her/their sexes, genders, and sexualities—like his/her/their races, nationalities, and civilizations—do not stop at the

borders of 'Europe'. This makes Neuwirth/Wurst a figure who threatened to expand 'Europe' horizontally beyond the continental and therefore racial, national, and civilizational terms in which 'European' integrationists imagine 'Europe'. What this means is that—for all his/her/their problematic appropriations of 'trans' phenomena—this Neuwirth/Wurst poses the question of 'European integration' in far more registers than contemporary Eastern, Western, or indeed integrated 'Europeans' can contend with.

In light of this, it should come as no surprise that Neuwirth/Wurst's profile on the official Eurovision website has never included any reference to Conchita Wurst as Colombian and never mentioned BarbadaConchita. Rather, it states, 'Tom Neuwirth was born on November 6th, 1988, and he for the first time performed as his alter ego Conchita Wurst in 2011' and 'Conchita Wurst was born as Tom Neuwirth on November 6th, 1988 in Gmunden, Austria.'²⁹ The official Eurovision line, then, is that Neuwirth/Wurst is nothing more than a drag act. After winning Eurovision 2014, Neuwirth/Wurst expressed his/her/their agreement with this impression, commenting, 'When politicians, like really famous ones, say that I'm a reason Europe will crush into pieces, I have to say I've never received a bigger honor. You know they think I'm that powerful—thank you. I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I'm just a drag queen' (Neuwirth/Wurst quoted on *Newsnight* 2014).

CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, I want to unpack Neuwirth/Wurst's self-deprecating claim to be 'just a drag queen' because this comment performs three important elisions. First, like Neuwirth/Wurst's biographies, it omits the complexity in Neuwirth/Wurst's figuration of his/her/their specific 'Eurovisioned bearded drag queen' that my multiple readings of Neuwirth/Wurst draw out. In so doing, it erases Neuwirth/Wurst's demand for a particular transbordered 'Europe', a demand that in part explains why Neuwirth/Wurst's drag queen mattered deeply to far more

Eastern European, Western European, and global leaders than one might have reasonably expected.

Second, it wrongly assumes that 'Europe' was not and is not always already in pieces.³⁰ Indeed, questions about which pieces—of the globe, of 'culture', of 'civilization'—belong to 'Europe' when, where, how, and why are as old as 'Europe itself'. In R. B. J. Walker's terms, this explains why 'Europe' is never where it is supposed to be or what it is supposed to be (2000, 14)—with respect to the 'Europe' of Eurovision or any other 'Europe'. Indeed, as Jacques Derrida argues, to think of 'Europe' is to experience the aporia—'the conditions of possibility as conditions of impossibility' (1993, 15). This 'Europe' that presents itself as a never fully formed promise (Derrida 1992) 'recurrently duplicates itself interminably, fissures itself, and contradicts itself' (Derrida 1993, 16). Reflecting on 'today's Europe', Derrida writes,

What is proper to a culture is to not be identical to itself. Not to not have an identity, but not to be able to identify itself, to be able to say 'me' or 'we'; to be able to take the form of a subject only in the non-identity to itself, or if you prefer, only in the difference with itself. There is no culture or cultural identity without this difference with itself (1992, 9–10).

This leads us to the third elision in Neuwirth/Wurst's claim to be 'just a drag queen'. It deflects attention away from the aporiatic aspects of 'Europe' and Neuwirth/Wurst alone and together. It leads us away from thinking about 'the critical difference' (Johnson 1980) they each embody and the promise they each hold in and beyond 'Europe itself'. Taken alone, each of these figures can be described as Derrida describes 'Europe', as a promised identity that is not identical to itself because it duplicates, fissures, and contradicts itself. In so doing, each of these figures escapes the grasp of an *either/or* logic. In fact, Derrida pointedly makes this claim about 'Europe' (1993, 15),³¹ Barthes pointedly makes this claim about sexes, genders, and sexualities (1974), and I pointedly make this claim about the 'Eurovisioned bearded drag queen'. What this suggests is that to encounter

either ‘Europe’ or Neuwirth/Wurst is to experience aporia. To encounter both together, I want to suggest, is to experience how the possibly ‘impossible desires’ (Gopinath 2005) of the ‘normal *and/or* perverse homosexual’ are figured by—and in turn figure—an impossibly possible ‘Europe’.

It should come as no surprise that my readings of ‘Europe’ and of the ‘Eurovisioned bearded drag queen’ do not match those of ‘European’ leaders or even that of Neuwirth/Wurst’s account of himself/herself/themselves. For Neuwirth/Wurst was taken up as a question before ‘Europe’ through traditional debates about horizontal reach (integrated community vs. individual sovereign nation-states) and vertical authority (how to figure the ‘Great Chain of Being’) that have long dominated a traditional ‘European’ integrationist imaginary. Inhabiting this imaginary, ‘European’ leaders expressed their will to know Neuwirth/Wurst through a traditional *either/or* logic of statecraft as mancraft—as singular, as stable, as an ahistorical sovereign man to be embraced or opposed. This allowed them to ‘weaponize’ Neuwirth/Wurst (Black 2014) as a foundation for their strategic organization and regulation of an ‘integrated Europe itself’. Their execution of this ‘European’ procedure of statecraft as mancraft became all the more coherent as, over time, Neuwirth/Wurst’s official biographies acquiesced to this logic by editing Neuwirth/Wurst into a more knowable and placeable ‘European’ subject. All of this reduced the questions Neuwirth/Wurst raised before ‘Europe’ to one: Are we ‘Europeans’ for liberal tolerance or against it, and does or should our liberal tolerance of the ‘homosexual’ stand for ‘an integrated Europe’?

What is curious about this rendering of sovereign subjectivities in this traditional logic of statecraft as mancraft is that neither Neuwirth/Wurst nor ‘Europe’ presents himself/herself/themselves/itself as—or indeed passes as—singular, ahistorical complete projects or subjectivities, especially around questions of integration and unstoppable unity. What this suggests is that Neuwirth/Wurst as a sovereign foundation for ‘Europe’ makes more sense as a plurally *and/or* foundation for an always already plurally *and/or* ‘Europe’, even as ‘European’ leaders busily disavow *and/or* logics altogether.³²

If we were to allow what 'European' leaders disallow—if we were to appreciate the plural logics that make both Neuwirth/Wurst and 'Europe' possible *and/or* impossible—more salient and politically powerful questions emerge. These include the following:

- How might Neuwirth/Wurst function as a queerly plural foundation for a pluralized 'European' statecraft as mancraft?
- How might this challenge traditional vertical and horizontal imaginaries of 'European' integration?
- What might 'the future of peace and freedom' that this pluralized Neuwirth/Wurst claims to stand for look like?
- How might the impossibly possible future Neuwirth/Wurst imagines order, reorder, and disorder not just 'Europe itself' but the regimes of knowledge about *sovereignty itself* that have prevailed at least since the Treaty of Westphalia, which demand that IR scholars understand and practice sovereignty as if it were exclusively singular?

To entertain these questions is to begin to appreciate the plural *and/or* logics that Neuwirth/Wurst injects into IR. It is to begin to appreciate why figurations of the 'homosexual' and the understandings of sovereignty that they generate and upon which they depend are not *wurst*, because they are not all the same in the practices of state sovereignty, the processes of regional integration, and the global imaginaries of what it means to be human.