

the pull and, in many cases, also the material necessity of inclusion. It means that we need to listen to those who continue to be folded “out of life, out toward death” – and who have also been banished from the *Dykes* universe – for the articulation of viable, more liveable alternatives to (neo)colonial, neoliberal capitalism that seem unimaginable from inside the behemoth.

3.6 CONCLUSION: WHEN FANTASY IS READ AS FACT

As this chapter has shown, when it comes to the depiction of race relations within lesbian communities, *Dykes* is actually very far from being an accurate “chronicle of lesbian culture and history.” It is clearly written from a white perspective and largely caters to the interests of white readers. Instead of offering a truthful account of how racism privileges white lesbians and disenfranchises Lesbians of Color, how white lesbians are responsible for upholding and perpetuating white racial dominance, how this dominance creates conflict in lesbian communities, and how both Lesbians of Color and white lesbians attempt to tackle these challenges, it presents an extended fantasy of a blissfully harmonious multiracial lesbian community unaffected by racism. As a fantasy, *Dykes* does not “fulfill the hope for a more integrated society,” as Gardiner hoped. According to Gardiner, *Dykes* is “a resounding rejoinder to the stereotype that feminism, and especially lesbian feminism, is primarily for and about privileged white women. By example the lesbian community of *Dykes* is antiracist, multi-racial, and religiously tolerant” (“*Dykes*” 85). A white fantasy of a diverse lesbian community untouched by racism, however, does not in and of itself prove that racism has indeed been overcome and integration achieved in the world outside the pages of the comic. It only proves that white lesbians fervently wish it to be so.

At the end of my analysis of the racial politics of *Dykes*, I find myself agreeing with Dean, the only commentator to-date who has critically remarked upon Bechdel’s post-racial portrayal of lesbian communities: “[T]he price of unity is,” indeed, “the disavowal of difference, here racial difference” (212). Dean sees clearly that the unity and harmony of the lesbian community in *Dykes* would be “threatened by racial friction,” (213), which, therefore, has to remain outside the bounds of Mo’s personal universe. Even though *Dykes* includes many multidimensional, non-stereotypical Characters of Color, in the final analysis, it remains a white fantasy of racial harmony that “sutures” (Yancy, “Un-sutured” xv) or closes itself off against critical Perspectives of Color that would question white lesbian innocence and political apathy in the face of white supremacy. As

George Yancy writes, “within the context of critically engaging whiteness, the concept of suture functions as a site of *keeping pure*, preserving what is unsullied. Moreover, to be sutured within the context of white identity is indicative of ‘the narrative authority’ of the white self that occludes alterity” (“Un-sutured” xv). *Dykes* is an example of exactly that white narrative authority that narrates not only the white self but also the racial ‘Other,’ who is not allowed to embody any truly challenging forms of alterity, in such a way that whiteness remains comfortable, pure, and unsullied.

Beirne comes to a very different conclusion than Dean and attempts to refute her analysis as follows:

her criticism is founded upon a reading of the text that has both missed the moments of racial differentiation and conflict and presumes a universalized understanding that diversity itself is problematic and that a degree of political or social unity implies total inattention to structures of privilege. On the contrary, *Dykes to Watch Out For* is frequently and consciously engaged with just such structures of privilege. (171)

As I hope to have shown, Beirne overstates the centrality and importance of the few instances in which racial conflict does occur while imagining an engagement with “structures of privilege” that is simply not there. Tellingly, she does not give a single example of where this “frequent and conscious” engagement supposedly takes place. It seems as if, for her, the diversity of the cast of characters is already proof positive of *Dykes*’ deep and exhaustive engagement with racism and white privilege.

The fact that so many (presumably white) commentators read this post- and multiracial fantasy as an accurate portrayal of reality speaks to the white longing for a post-racial LGBTIQ space in which white lesbians can be both racially aware and innocent without having to do any of the hard work of dismantling racism at all levels (personal, inter-personal, institutional, and cultural). This longing appears to be so deep as to become almost delusional in that it leads white lesbians to accept as fact what is clearly an expression of white wishful thinking.

Politically, this longing is rather dangerous because, as I spelled out in the preceding chapters, it leads white lesbians to underestimate severely both the effects of racism and our own implication in its perpetuation. This underestimation in turn leads to a neglect of anti-racist action, which allows racism to flourish unimpeded. In particular, the fallacious conviction that racism has already been overcome – even if only inside the LGBTIQ community – makes LGBTIQ politics vulnerable to co-optation by countries that promise inclusion in exchange for

participation in and justification of their racist and (neo)colonial projects. As *Dykes* shows, a neglect of racism and anti-racist struggles leads to a narrow political vision that is unable to imagine alternatives to a single-issue struggle for LGBTIQ inclusion.

