

Clara Beccaro, Language and Migration Proposal

Title: The Discursive Production of Worthiness: Queer Refugees and the French Asylum Procedure

Abstract:

For the last decade, France has legitimized its anti-immigration and border containment practices by framing immigrants as “intolerant”, threats to the “sexual democracy”—one that embraces feminist and LGBT rights—that France has been “committed” to advance.

Yet, the recent increase in queer people seeking asylum in France has become a threat to the exclusionary practices of the state that were legitimized by refusing to tolerate intolerance. With queer and trans people of color seeking France protection, such claims have indeed risked being deconstructed or obliterated.

What function, then, has language held in the operations of the French asylum procedure (and of larger immigrations politics) for LGBTQ+ refugees? What I suggest, is that “language”, throughout the French asylum procedure, has become an apparatus designed to assess the “worthiness” of queer people seeking asylum. In turn, this discursive-production of “worthy” selves has allowed the French state to assess and ensure that refugee status is granted only to those who will sustain the contradictions of the French republican project of “sexual democracy” rather than threaten it.