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FORUM
Queer Forum on Navigating Normativity Between Field and Academe in India

On Queerly Hidden Lives: Precarity and (In)visibility between Formal and Informal Economies in India

Aniruddha Dutta

When he was called to his boss's cubicle one morning in spring 2017, Subhra had no idea what was in store for him.[1] Subhra was in his second year as a junior employee in a multinational chemical engineering firm that specializes in producing and supplying chemicals for processing leather. A native of West Bengal in eastern India, he had moved for his job to a bustling north Indian city—a hub of the Indian leather industry, hot and dusty with the grit and smoke from the hundreds of tanneries that dot its outskirts. Subhra's job sometimes took him to the tanneries to which his company sold chemicals for leather processing, and he also worked in the leather finishing labs of his corporation. He lived with some of his colleagues in a "corporate guesthouse"—essentially a glorified apartment rented by the company as subsidized accommodation for its employees. Removed from his hometown, family, and friends, Subhra's life revolved around the bare essentials of his job—his colleagues, the lab, and the tanneries, tempered by lonely weekend outings to movie theaters in nearby shopping malls. As he often told me, he felt that he had no real friends in his city of work.

Even so, he hadn't anticipated the crisis that was about to erupt at his workplace that morning. His boss, accompanied by another senior colleague, confronted him gravely. One of his roommates apparently had surreptitiously acquired a picture from his phone and showed it to his seniors. The photo, taken by Subhra himself a few months before this incident, showed him cuddling with a friend whom he had invited to stay at the guesthouse over a weekend.

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Although intimate, the picture was not explicitly sexual. He had even obtained permission from his seniors to invite his friend over. However, according to his boss, although Subhra had sought permission for a male friend, the photo revealed that Subhra's friend was actually transgender—or, to use his boss's exact words, a *hijra* (someone belonging to a stigmatized South Asian community of feminine-identified people usually assigned male at birth, with distinct customs and professions). The boss further alleged that the landlord of the guesthouse had received a complaint from one of their neighbors, who had been shocked and scandalized to see a *hijra* in the vicinity. In this circumstance, instead of berating Subhra's roommate for circulating a confidential photo, his seniors forcefully attacked him, accusing him that he had brought a *hijra* into the house for "illicit" purposes, and that he had an "indecent" and "dirty" relationship with the said *hijra*.

That friend, the "*hijra*," was me. I had met Subhra about six months before this incident when I was in West Bengal doing ethnographic fieldwork with trans-*kothi-hijra* communities (*kothi* is another community of feminine-identified persons related to *hijras*).[2] Subhra was visiting his hometown on a short break from work, and found me online through mutual trans and *kothi* friends. Over the ensuing months, what started as a casual fling—a distraction from my usual fieldwork—began to turn into an intimate friendship, and he invited me to visit him. I was hesitant. He lived in a state that was being increasingly taken over by Hindu right-wing political forces. Subhra had mentioned that most of his colleagues were upper caste, religious, and conservative. Some frowned on his Bengali meat- and fish-eating habits, which they found difficult to reconcile with his upper caste background, as North Indian upper castes are more commonly vegetarian than their Bengali counterparts. The extent of ingrained caste, class, and gender hierarchies within the leather industry had taken Subhra by surprise. Tannery workers in Subhra's city are typically Dalit ("lower" or oppressed caste) or Muslim, whereas supervisors and tannery owners are mostly upper caste Hindus or rich Muslims. The laborers barely make minimum wage; they constantly deal with hazardous carcinogenic chemicals but are not provided with safety gear and typically have respiratory problems, skin ailments, and shortened life expectancies.[3] Further, since the victory of the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party in the 2014 national elections, Hindu vigilantes have increasingly attacked Dalit or Muslim tanners and hide transporters on suspicion of slaughtering or desecrating cows—an animal sacred in some versions of Hinduism—though much Indian leather is sourced from other animals, particularly buffalos.[4] As an upper caste Hindu and a leather technician, Subhra falls within a relatively protected and privileged bracket of "skilled" workers. Yet, even he had not been provided with safety equipment by his company—at least,

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Figure 1. Subhra at his workplace.

in his case, he can afford to buy his own. His position is all the more precarious as a temporary employee who may be fired anytime.

Moreover, Subhra is small-framed, soft-spoken, and not conventionally masculine. A few months after we met, he told me in a private conversation that he believed that no one entirely fit the gender binary and thus everyone was internally trans on some level. His Facebook profile even indicated "genderqueer" (later modified to "pangender") as his chosen gender, somewhat hidden from sight in the "about" section, though in everyday life he presents as cisgender and uses male pronouns for himself in anglophone contexts. Despite his attempts to conform, his difference from hegemonic masculinity—along with his outsider status within North Indian upper caste culture—makes him vulnerable to being bullied and ordered around by older men at his workplace. Having heard such stories, I was anxious about how my visible gender nonconformity would be received by his colleagues and how it might affect his position. But he insisted that I come, and negotiated permission to let me stay at the guesthouse. His roommates were polite, if distant; one of them even shifted to the other bedroom so that Subhra and I could share a room. Although this lulled me into a sense of security, Subhra warned me that I shouldn't go out of the house by myself in the daytime as his landlord or neighbors might be curious or shocked. He would permit me to only go out in the evenings, accompanied by him. We would exit the neighborhood as fast as possible, relaxing only in the relative anonymity of city streets and malls. I balked at these restrictions. *Pace* his genderqueerness, it all seemed to fall into a pattern of male behavior I knew well.

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Many men are ashamed to be seen with visibly trans or gender nonconforming partners or friends, and I accused him of being just like them.

But now, it seemed that his fear of exposure via association had come true. His boss accused him of breaking house rules and ordered him to vacate the guesthouse within a week. He was devastated; besides fearing for his job, he couldn't afford separate lodgings on his earnings at that point. So he begged, cried, and apologized repeatedly. He eventually managed to keep his job and stay on at the guesthouse, but at a huge price. His bosses called his parents—who knew and disapproved of his preferences—and warned them that their son was going astray. His father sternly warned him; his mother pleaded with him to never go back to dating *hijras*. For months afterward, colleagues joked behind his back, and sometimes in front of him, that he fucked *chhakkas* (a pejorative term for gender nonconforming people). Constant surveillance ensued at the guesthouse: if he tried to go out to make a phone call, one of his roommates would surreptitiously follow and keep a tab. So he would have to hide to call me. He was given a strict curfew and a set of house rules to follow. He often mused that none of this would have ever happened had one of his roommates brought a wife or fiancée over.

))) Between Formal and Informal Economies

After returning to my academic job in the United States, I ineffectually looked for remedies to the situation. Over the course of my fieldwork, I have often helped to organize against various forms of discrimination or violence affecting my *kothi-hijra* friends and interlocutors. But Subhra's workplace was a very different "field." As is standard for MNCs (multinational corporations), the chemicals giant he worked for has a nondiscrimination policy for employees. But he was not directly employed by the company; he had been informally subcontracted through a local intermediary or "third party" without a written contract. Junior employees like him do not even officially exist for the corporation—their names are not incorporated into the employee roster. In a conversation in May 2018, about a year after the aforementioned incident, he told me,

> our salary is given from a percentage of the incentives the company gets from sales deals with tanneries . . . it is not shown in the official accounts of either the MNC or tanneries . . . the global bosses [of the MNC] come and see, the global bosses do not care . . . no need to care also . . . they tell the local bosses, we need this much business—achieve it! If you can do it alone, do it alone . . . if you need a team, get a team! The local bosses recruit people, fire people. . . . All MNCs in the leather sector work like this!

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Of course, Subhra's employment situation is hardly unique; it is symptomatic of the global restructuring of capitalism over the last few decades. Many scholars have described what Jan Breman calls the "growing insecurity of work conditions" under neoliberalism—the replacement of stable jobs with precarious, unprotected employment, and the undermining of market regulations and social benefits previously gained by organized labor.[5] Breman, however, disagrees with Guy Standing's argument that a new class, the "precariat," is globally replacing an older, more secure proletariat.[6] In postcolonial states such as India, organized labor has always been a small fraction of the workforce and low-pay casualized work has long been the norm in the much larger informal sector.[7] Although precarious labor has a long history in the postcolonies, international financial institutions, corporations, and states have increasingly promoted labor flexibility and fostered the proliferation of short-contract, part-time, and subcontracted employment across both the Global North and South.[8] This effectively means that the Indian workforce is caught between older and newer forms of precarity. The informal sector of small, unincorporated businesses still retains the larger share of workers, but with liberalization, casualized employment has also been increasing in the growing formal or organized sector through practices such as subcontracted labor and the outsourcing of production.[9]

Subhra's profession epitomizes this juncture between older and newer regimes of informal labor. Traditionally, the Indian leather industry has had a much higher proportion of its workforce in the informal sector—such as women who stitch leather goods in home-based workshops, or tannery workers employed in small unregistered units—but the industry has become more organized and export-oriented in the period of trade liberalization, with an increasing presence of MNCs and a declining share of production from the informal segment, which has been struggling to compete with corporations.[10] Yet, in apparent contradiction, the number of informal workers in leather has only increased.[11] This is due to two distinct forms of subcontracted labor. First, companies subcontract parts of the production process (like stitching footwear and other leather goods) to workers in informal units.[12] Second, organized firms, including both MNCs and large locally-owned enterprises such as legally registered tanneries, "subcontract informal laborers who do not . . . work in informal enterprises" to escape labor regulations.[13] Subhra falls in this latter bracket of labor—an "informal" worker in the "formal" sector. In both its forms, subcontracting simultaneously enables and conceals rampant exploitation: corporations cut costs, avoid obligations of direct employment such as promotions or benefits, and curtail legal liabilities for dangerous work conditions.[14] "The global bosses come and see," but absent from employee records, workers like Subhra are invisible in plain sight. Although he has managed to retain his job, Subhra frequently mentions arbitrary orders and

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uncompensated overtime work, undergirded by a work culture of fear, sycophancy toward the "local bosses," and intense rivalry among juniors—given the lack of protection from both corporate human resource policies and labor laws. In the situation, Subhra cannot dream of justice, only of escape—either to formal employment within India, or abroad with my help, both without success so far.

))) Gendered Precarity and the Politics of Visibility

If Subhra's ambivalent location between the corporate and informal sectors is symptomatic of the broad transformations affecting Indian workers, our interaction further exposed the intersections between labor precarity, class and caste hierarchies, and gender/sexual norms. Rajalaxmi Kamath notes that informal labor, although unregulated in terms of lacking legal oversight, is "heavily regulated by social structures—caste, class, gender, religion."[15] Even before my arrival, Subhra's ambiguous relation to cisgender masculinity—male-presenting, but not quite masculine enough—rendered him vulnerable to such regulation. His situation was further complicated by my entry as a visibly gender nonconforming figure from the fields of academic feminism and LGBT activism into the predominantly male field of leather. Our profoundly different fields illustrate not just differences between our individual locations and levels of privilege, but also distinct articulations of capital with gendered labor—trans and queer subject positions carry distinct socioeconomic values in our respective locations within transnational capitalism. The disjuncture between our locations and experiences compelled me to reimagine both normativity and resistance from Subhra's vantage point.

Whereas both my academic training and fieldwork had attuned me to how gendered divisions of labor affect feminized subjects, Subhra's fraught position in his field helped me realize how gendered labor hierarchies within capitalism go beyond the subjugation of cis women or visibly trans/queer workers, and how the exploitation of feminized labor intersects with the regulation of cisgender masculinity. Much has been said about the feminization of labor under neoliberalism—the increasing recruitment of women as a strategic pool of cheap labor into low-tier sweatshop or factory work within transnational production chains, and the exploitation of their social vulnerabilities for value extraction.[16] Indeed, cis women are disproportionately employed as informal workers in the Indian formal sector, Subhra's bracket of the workforce.[17] But the feminization of labor does not only affect cis women: men historically oppressed by race, class, or caste have often been relegated to "women's" work, restricting

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their access to normative masculinity.[18] Further, many argue that in neoliberal capitalism, the general working conditions for all genders come to resemble traditional features of women's work—low pay, flexibility, casualization.[19] Leslie Salzinger has argued that the trope of productive femininity—women as docile, dexterous workers—becomes generalized beyond female-assigned people into a desired attribute that all laborers are sought to be disciplined into; the desirability of productive femininity even leads to the targeted recruitment of flamboyantly feminine gay men in Mexican maquiladoras.[20] Likewise, I have observed my trans and *kothi* friends being recruited into call centers in India as a cheap, and often sexually abused, labor pool. Indeed, trans feminine subjects from the Global South may become valorized as sources of reproductive and affective labor, such that their dehumanization is counterbalanced by their value in transnational economies of labor.[21]

Across these cases, femininity and feminization—the interplay of sexism and (trans)misogyny with the racialized global division of labor—provides the default template for gendered exploitation, even when not restricted to female-assigned bodies and encompassing men in feminized jobs. But such feminization is not the only or even primary mode of gendered exploitation in the heavily male-dominated Indian leather industry, where women workers remain a minority owing to the historical association of leatherwork with men, especially Dalit and Muslim men.[22] While about 30% of workers in the Indian leather industry are women and their numbers are growing, the percentage varies according to sector and region—the proportion of women workers is higher in home-based footwear production than in tanneries, and more women are employed in South India than in the North, where Subhra is based.[23] Women workers are even scarcer in Subhra's specific sector of chemical-based leather processing—indeed, there are none in his office. In a context where cis or trans feminine embodiments are not readily legible as productive, labor is regulated through hierarchized masculinities. When Subhra joined his company, he was positioned within a hierarchical male society led by the "local bosses" of the MNC and their clients the tannery owners, followed by older or senior subcontracted MNC staff, then junior subcontracted employees, and finally the Dalit (mostly male) tannery workers. Subcontracted MNC staff like Subhra shared rooms, beds, and vehicles, and provided credit to each other when their salaries ran out. Such a fraternal pooling of resources helps cut labor costs for the company. The fraternizing also translates to a lot of "ragging" or harassment of juniors by seniors as they compete for stable contracts. Here, Subhra's genderqueerness is not treated as the valued (if exploited) attribute of productive femininity, but rather disciplined and rendered abject through the threat of public shaming and job loss. In the immediate aftermath of the exposure of our relationship, the derision and

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constant surveillance that Subhra faced for being interested in *chhakkas* rather than women intensified the regulation of his workday and the extraction of his labor. He was obligated to do additional work, couched as a moral injunction for his own good—a second chance to rectify himself, for which he should be grateful. This was not just a case of exploited genderqueerness, for it was not only his inadequate masculinity and his association with a putative *hijra*, but also the way in which he was *distinguished* from the figure of the *hijra* as an upper caste apparently cisgender man, that served as a disciplining mechanism. Performing masculinity in the corporate workplace entails affective labor—maintaining respectful relations with seniors, humoring queer-transphobic colleagues, putting up with their jokes, performing the younger brother figure to placate his colleagues and hang on to his job. Indeed, Subhra had to treat his roommates to a lavish dinner, which he could hardly afford, to garner their favor. It is thus *both* the exposure of his gender/sexual nonconformity, and his inclusion within a hierarchical male fraternity, that undergirds labor precarity here. Subhra's position oscillates between feminized abjection and masculine conformity and their intersectional impact intensifies labor extraction, providing no easy escape. Thus, his narrative not only extends gendered precarity to trans and queer subjects, but also pushes it beyond the cis/trans binary. Normative cis masculinity is itself exposed as a precarious, internally hierarchized construction whose obligatory performance and reaffirmation serve to exacerbate labor precarity.

This situation signals the limitations and exclusions of a politics of visibility. The exposure of Subhra's genderqueerness and our relationship takes place at a time of increasing trans/queer visibility both transnationally and in India. Certain trans and queer people, such as myself, gain some degree of representative inclusion (that is, inclusion through tokenistic representation) within the institutions and discourses of liberal democracy and are recuperated as productive subjects within neoliberal economies—including an increasingly corporatized academia, where a piece like this translates to academic capital.[24] My fieldwork with Indian *kothi-hijra* communities has helped me design courses on transgender politics and transnational sexualities, which are treated as valuable additions to university curricula. Meanwhile, middle class transgender activists in Indian metropolises have lobbied for trans inclusion within the corporate sector, and some companies have responded with trans-specific recruitment.[25] Across these varied arenas, we have strategically leveraged transgender visibility as a valued attribute for neoliberal capital—bringing diversity to the academia and corporate sector alike. At the same time, activists have foregrounded the violence faced by trans and gender nonconforming people, leveraging the injuries of visibly trans/queer persons to demand inclusion within citizenship and protection from the state. In India, a hard-won struggle has brought legal recognition for

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transgender as a particularly vulnerable identity category, with the attendant promise of rights and welfare measures.[26]

Such increasing legal and economic recognition may deliver crucial rights and protections to gender nonconforming people, who often don't have a choice in terms of being marked and made visible. However, several scholars and activists caution against an uncritical celebration of visibility. Jason Ritchie critiques a "conciliatory politics of visibility that positions the state as the guarantor of equality" and ignores groups that are violently excluded by nation-states.[27] Trans and queer people are instrumentalized by neoliberal imperial projects as symbols of Western progress to justify neocolonial wars; trans visibility feeds into the commodification of trans identities for value extraction.[28] Further, the representative inclusion of trans people in dominant culture often substitutes for the actual reparation or redistribution of resources.[29]

The foundational limitations of emerging regimes of trans recognition become clear in the inadequacy of the Indian state's measures for transgender rights to tackle instances of employment discrimination such as Subhra's case. The Indian Government's Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, a revised version of which is set to be introduced in the Parliament even as I write this article, prohibits discrimination against trans persons in employment.[30] Early drafts of the bill mandated certification by "screening committees" including medical personnel for legal recognition as transgender, which attracted widespread criticism from trans communities.[31] The revised version might remove the committee, but is still likely to retain certification through bureaucratic gatekeepers such as magistrates.[32] Although the state's definition of "transgender" includes genderqueer or nonbinary identities and thus technically extends to Subhra, the governmental surveillance of trans identification limits the likelihood of his inclusion within anti-discrimination measures. Many activists have opposed such surveillance and advocated the right to the self-determination of legal gender as male, female, or transgender irrespective of embodiment, with the provision of a separate transgender certificate for binary-identified trans people who wish to have male or female identification but also seek trans-specific welfare.[33] But even the discourse of self-determination requires that people must legally declare their identities (for instance, through notarized affidavits) and become part of a publicly identified minority to be recognized as subjects of trans-specific benefits and protections. As a consolidated community response to the bill states, "transgender persons" should be "granted the right to self-determine and to seek benefits according to such identity/expression."[34] This assumes a correspondence between gendered vulnerability and trans "identity/expression," precluding the gendered exploitation of people like Subhra who are compelled to socially identify and present as cisgender. Thus, even if gatekeeping

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mechanisms are removed, the dominant framework for preventing discrimination against gender nonconforming people places the onus on individuals to claim a legally defined and socially demarcated category and become legible as such, rather than instituting broad anti-discrimination measures and protections against gender/sexual bias that are not contingent on public identification as transgender (which, of course, need not preclude trans-specific legislation).[35] Further, although the revised bill mandates all organizations to designate an official to investigate complaints of workplace discrimination, it is not clear how this redressal mechanism will be enforced on unmonitored or unincorporated informal enterprises, or address informally employed workers in formal firms—many of whom, like Subhra, are absent from employee records. This leaves out the majority of the workforce, reinforces neoliberal labor hierarchies, and doubly excludes people like Subhra whose (trans)gender identities and even employee status are made invisible.

The exclusion of informal workers from anti-discrimination mechanisms at a time of increasing trans representation in the corporate sector reveals how capitalism is not one; it does not follow a unitary logic but is contingently variegated as per its shifting articulations with social logics such as caste and gender.[36] In some contexts—such as the economies I inhabit in the United States or metropolitan India—trans visibility is signified positively as the incorporation of diversity into representative democracy and neoliberalism, and trans/queer people are valorized, even if exploited, as productive figures and sources of value: "capitalism loves differentiation."[37] But not always—in other contexts, visibility means abjection and severe exploitation without even tokenistic inclusion in regimes of representation and economies of value, as seen in the collusion among transnational capital, caste, and heteropatriarchy in the leather industry. Subhra and my relationship thus oscillates between distinct fields—one where visibility carries the promise of upward mobility, representation, and limited inclusion within hegemonic regimes, another where such representative inclusion is actively denied. Subhra wants to enter the first field, but the pathway to inclusion is littered with checkpoints, both literal and figurative.[38]

For Subhra, the threshold between informal and formal employment serves as a key checkpoint from abjection to inclusion, withholding access to corporate and governmental anti-discrimination measures. But there are others as well, such as the surveillance and delimitation of trans recognition. When he aspires to join me abroad, the checkpoints only multiply—immigration policies, visa requirements, English proficiency, even normative kinship arrangements. Although we are not strictly monogamous, any leverage that my location in the United States might provide for his immigration, such as sponsorship for his visa from my academic institution, would be contingent on our marital status.

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Until such checkpoints can be crossed or dismantled, legal or social visibility is not a beneficial bargain for many like Subhra, given the costs of exposure versus the inadequacy of the state's recognition and redressal mechanisms. Thus, a politics of visibility that does not undermine capitalism might only contribute to mechanisms of surveillance and exploitation that seize upon gender/sexual variance to further extract labor.

))) (In)visibility as Queer Resistance

What a politics of visibility also misses are the various resistant ways in which people strategically negotiate and balance exposure and invisibility. My aforementioned *kothi* friends who work in call centers, facing both strict male dress codes and sexual harassment, survive by leveraging their sexualization to maintain good working relations with bosses, which often means flirting back to establish good terms and even move up the ladder, but at the same time minimizing their overt femininity to avoid being disciplined and prevent abuse. Unlike the *kothis*, Subhra is not sexualized in his workplace, but he too is marked out; he attempts to fit within cis masculinity and minimizes public exposure with "visible" people like me when in his city of work. I, too, strive to "pass" undetected in public spaces and restrooms in his city, sometimes attempting maleness, sometimes femaleness—not to "break" gender binaries but rather to dodge gender, pass under its intense radar. This entails a shift from how I present myself both in my academic workplace and during fieldwork. In such contexts, I might visibly contravene gender norms to express myself, or as a form of solidarity and community-building with my trans-*kothi-hijra* sisters—visiting public cruising sites with them, vocally protesting against incidents of harassment, learning to perform the *thikri* or the signature loud clap used by *hijras*, which acts as a gesture of self-assertion and immediately marks one as distinct from the mainstream. Although risky, such protests build on the possibility that our public gender nonconformity and legibility as transgender may be leveraged to gain protections as a legally recognized vulnerable group. In contrast, with Subhra, I have had to adapt to a situation where the trajectory from abjectness to representative inclusion is less readily available.

Yet, for Subhra, total invisibility and gender conformity is no escape either, consigning him to subjugation and exploitation within the hierarchical male fraternity of leather. Thus, as the initial uproar over our relationship has gradually died down, Subhra has also used the symbolic capital gained via his association with me—the trans/queer subject who is included within neoliberal regimes—to counteract his subjugated position in whatever small ways possible. For instance,

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he has showcased pictures from our vacations on social media while minimizing direct shots with me, thus leveraging our value within economies of pink tourism to counter his devaluation in the economy of leather—even as such display risks renewed abjection. Indeed, this very article—for which he has requested that I use his name while obscuring that of his employer—likewise tries to leverage academic capital. Thus, Subhra attempts to manage his (in)visibility to both minimize exploitation and outwit surveillance, to seek representation and yet be opaque to technologies of power—even as such resistance is inevitably structurally limited and prone to cooptation by transnational capital.[39]

I had initially titled this article "Corporate Precarity and Hidden Queer Lives." But if queer is not just a shorthand for LGBTQ identities, but an inadequate, aspirational term to capture various forms of resistance (however constrained) to gender/sexual binaries and hierarchies, then hiding may be understood as not just an adaptive attribute of closeted queer lives, but as a queer tactic of resistance in itself—one that reveals the limitations of visibility politics, but does not necessarily operate in a binary opposition to visibility.[40] Subhra's position between the formal corporate sector and the informal economy undergirds his strategically mixed approach to (in)visibility. An aspirational representative inclusion within capitalism is tensely negotiated with an opacity that seeks to escape surveillance and exploitation. In that aspect, his narrative is perhaps emblematic of the contradictory pressures acting on the transforming working classes of India, and of the contested place of trans and queer representation within emerging regimes of capital and labor.

NOTES

At the time of this article going into press, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill referenced in the essay has been passed in a slightly modified form in the lower house of the Indian parliament; the revised 2018 version retains the screening mechanisms and has attracted widespread protest from trans activists. This specific bill may or may not be revised further as it goes through the upper house of the parliament, but overall, the state's attempts to reinforce the governmental surveillance of gender identity, rather than gender self-determination, remains a clear long-term pattern.

1. At his behest, I have used his real name but withheld the name and location of his employer.
2. On *hijras* and *kothis*, see Gayatri Reddy, *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005).

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4. Jahnavi Sen, "The Unmaking of Kanpur's Leather Industry," *The Wire*, April 12, 2016, https://thewire.in/uncategorised/the-unmaking-of-kanpurs-leather-industry.
5. Jan Breman, "A Bogus Concept?," *New Left Review* 84 (November–December 2013): 130–8.
6. Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011).
7. Breman, "A Bogus Concept?," 130–8.
8. Ibid., 135–8.
9. "The Casualization of Organized Labor," *Livemint*, November 10, 2017, https://www.livemint.com/Money/WMJmHet03P0Zg0Pk7CjydI/The-casualization-of-organized-labour.html. Also see "Informal Economy in South Asia," ILO in India, accessed May 14, 2018, http://www.ilo.org/newdelhi/areasofwork/informal-economy/lang--en/index.htm.
10. Rahul Giri and Rubina Verma, "Informality in Indian Manufacturing," Working Paper, February 2017, https://editorialexpress.com/cgi-bin/conference/download.cgi?db_name=SED2017&paper_id=1566.
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