

Of all Times, in all Cultures (I): Robert Aldrich's *Gay Life and Culture: A World History*

Leontine Bijleveld

Even just to admire the 250 or so beautiful illustrations, Robert Aldrich's *Gay Life and Culture: A World History*, is worth examining. The red boots on the cover, a detail from Rudolf Schlichter's painting, 'Women's Pub' of 1925, subtly demonstrates that 'gay' is a loose term that covers a range of meanings. Women and men all over the world have always felt attracted to members of the same sex emotionally and/or physically, but in the course of history there has always been a huge variety in these attractions, not just in the terminology used for them, but also in social and cultural contexts.

In his introduction, Aldrich offers a variety of sketches of that behaviour. He examines the different terms for homosexual behaviour. (Though he doesn't note that the term *lesbian* was used as far back as the tenth century, connecting the history of the poet Sappho with sexual relations between women, as explained by Laura Gowing later in chapter six.) He suggests that, on the one hand, a sort of sexual globalization has taken place and the modern world enjoys an open sexual culture with a large number of different outlets for sexuality between members of the same sex, both in their behaviour and in their identity. He points to a lively, positive and open homosexual and lesbian culture in most of the larger cities of Europe, America, Australia and Asia.

In some other countries, however, many men and women choose to live their non-mainstream lifestyle less publicly, and there are also cultures, such as in the Middle-East and North Africa, where no institutionalised public life exists for gays and lesbians. Women and men who harbour homosexual feelings do not flaunt them in public or assume a homosexual identity. Meanwhile, there are places where sexual acts with members of the same sex make up part of centuries-old initiation rites.

Despite sexual globalization, therefore, we cannot ignore geographic, cultural and historical differences. A study of the history of same-sex relationships and examination of other cultures can serve to provide a context for our ideas about sexual attitudes and behaviour, and teach us to look differently at dominant sexual standards and values. Aldrich demonstrates this through his description of developments in Australia, including within aboriginal cultures, where lots of proof of oral and anal practices between men as well as indications of sexual acts between women has been found. It is, in the words of a present-day Aboriginal lesbian activist 'not a white man's disease' - 'it is probably the only thing we didn't catch off the white man'.

For his round trip through the homosexual world in time and space, Aldrich, a professor

of European History at the University of Sydney, procured the participation of thirteen scientists from eight different countries - France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the US. The result is therefore not just an excellent combination of generalised and specialised knowledge, but draws on information contained in recent publications in languages other than English. Judging from the literature list and the notes that attend each chapter, we can gather just how broad and diverse the research of (mainly) western academics has been, certainly in the last decade.

The next five chapters discuss same-sex intimacy, chiefly in Europe, in the centuries leading up to the invention of the word 'homosexuality'. Charles Hupperts, lecturer at the University of Amsterdam, examines the classical Greek and Roman world. Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller, Hamburg's professor of Middle Ages History, explains how, in that period, homo-erotic male friendships between bishops, abbots and scholars coexisted with a misogynist culture, while simultaneously christian theologians were developing a 'scientific' march against 'unnatural' sexual acts which culminated in the persecution of sodomites when the Inquisition was established in 1233. Hergemöller dates the first public execution fifteen years earlier than Byrne Fone did in his book *Homophobia, a history* (discussed elsewhere in this publication). In 1277, he points out, Rudolf I of Habsburg ordered a certain 'gentleman from Haspisperch' to be burnt 'because of the sodomitic crime' in Basel.

There are two chapters dedicated to the early-modern era. Under the title, 'Early Modern Europe, 1400-1700', Helmut Puff of the University of Michigan discusses the persecution of men who were accused of male-male sexual activity and other 'unnatural' sex behaviours in Renaissance Europe. The persecution of sodomites varied in intensity according to the times and the country, but seems to have been rare in Orthodox Russia. At the same time, (male) homo-social cultures flourished, not only in humanistic Italy, but also, for example, within the more privileged classes of France and Sweden. 'Lesbians and Their Like in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800' is the title of Laura Gowing's (King's College, London) inspiring article. Drawing on both recent and older research (from the 1980s and 90s), she demonstrates that there are actually no grounds for the traditional assumption that sexual relations between women were unimaginable before 1900. She talks about the 'rediscovery' of the clitoris by European anatomists in the sixteenth century and about tribalism, hermaphrodites (people with the attributes of both sexes), dildos, women in men's clothes and romantic friendships between women. She demonstrates that pre-modern lawmakers were substantially inclined to agree that women could also fall under the definition of being involved in sodomy, which was branded a capital crime though relatively few cases of the punishment are known to have been applied. The most well-known cases involved women who went through life as men and sometimes even married women. Given the relatively limited social and physical freedom of movement for women, lesbian intimacy would have been practised far more often behind closed doors than sex between men. The notion that lesbianism was the 'impossible love', the 'silent sin', still existed at the end of the eighteenth century till it was superseded by the newer notion that women were by nature pure and asexual.

In Canadian professor Michael Sibalis' chapter on the pre-modern period entitled 'Male homosexuality in the time of the Enlightenment and the Revolution, 1680-1850', he examines

three important developments. The first is that in the big cities of western Europe, homosexual subcultures existed outside the privileged classes about which information has survived. Police sources provide the most information, including information about their persecution. Sibalis cites two dates for the last executions in Germany, 1726 in Hamburg and 1762 in Württemberg. The most obvious characterisation of the subculture might be the 'shameless effeminacy of some'. The second development was that eighteenth century Enlightenment intellectuals cited homosexuals in secular terms as opposed to religious terms. Sodomy went against nature, perhaps, but was caused by social and psychological influences. So they could condemn both sodomy and its repression. Social and moral improvements would be the best remedy, they maintained. That led eventually to the third important development: reforms in the penal law in a number of countries on the European continent, leading to the decriminalising of sodomy. At the end of his article, Sibalis establishes a link between increased visibility and the growing (medical and psychiatric) interest in homosexuality.

Brett Genny Beemyn, University of Massachusetts, takes the analysis across the Atlantic, to differing cultures and nearly three centuries in North, Meso and South America. Beemyn is one of the few male contributors who demonstrates an eye for diverse gender relationships as well as the literature of female researchers. He delves into 'cross gender roles' in indigenous cultures - women-men (2) and men-women that are regarded as genders in themselves. Sexual relationships within male and female societies are well documented and very readable, similar to the romantic friendships of women and their true companions as celebrated by such artists as Thoreau and Whitman.

Florence Tamagne (University of Lille) looks at a number of European countries (mainly England, France and Germany) in the period 1870-1940/5 in 'The Homosexual Age, 1870-1940'. Her article is another demonstration that it is possible to write about female as well as male same-sex experiences. She explains how developing medical insights gained a broader audience via literature (think, for example, of Proust and Radclyffe Hall), but at the turn of the century the public at large became aware of homosexuality in the context of countless scandals. Increased visibility, also in art, led to stronger measures against 'corruption' and tightening of the penal law (Germany, England) although attempts to criminalize lesbianism failed in these countries. Social control from family and church was thought to be pressure enough to keep female sexuality in check, Tamagne explains. But she notes as well that the fear that changes in the law would open up information to women about sexual practices they were thought to know nothing about could also have played a role.

The chapter on the post war period by Domenico Rizzo (researcher in late modern history and gender at the University of Naples) is as good as gender-blind. He cites the Danish organisation, Forbundet 1948, as the first post-war gay organisation (while the Dutch Shakespeare club, predecessor to the COC, dates from 1946) and he actually ascribes the motto 'the personal is political' to the gay movement without any reference to the feminist movement. The fact that the women's movement was important for the perception of lesbians is also barely referenced in Leila Rupp's 'Loving Women in the Modern World'. This professor of women studies from Santa Barbara (California) describes various patterns in women's relationships with each other in different parts of the world as from the beginning of the

nineteenth century - i.e. before, during and after the 'discovery', naming and announcement of lesbian identity. That Rupp draws from 'cases' here and there that have already been discussed in other chapters was not disturbing since she aired original and exciting interpretations.

Most new information for relative insiders is in the three chapters about other cultures, in which Lee Wallace, from the University of Auckland, demonstrates that she is uniquely qualified to give attention to women as well as men and other genders. Without minimising the importance of other geographical locations, she concentrates on descriptions of sexual encounters in America, Africa and Oceania made by Europeans (colonists and ethnographers / anthropologists), spanning more or less five centuries. The sometimes gruesome punishments for sexual deviance that were imposed by colonial authorities in all the parts of the American continent is depicted graphically and vividly in the 1590 colour engraving that accompanies the chapter. It shows how conqueror Vasco Nuñez de Balboa lets his hunting dogs loose on young men who, dressed in women's clothes, were deemed guilty of 'the most abhorrible and unnatural lechery' in the area around present day Panama (1513).

The Venetian art historian, Vincenzo Patanè, has researched male same-sex relations in the Islamic societies of North Africa and the Middle East. His contribution to the book includes interpretations of the Koran and literature with homo-erotic undertones (going back to the eighteenth century), an analysis of sex tourism, which started there late in the nineteenth century, and the current situation. The sexual division in society there is based on strongly masculine and hierarchical lines, its most important distinction being between the male man and its opposite - everything that is not (women, boys, slaves, concubines, servants, transvestites, hermaphrodites and even non-believers in the faith). The distinction active-passive is, in other words, authoritative, and not between 'gays' and 'straights'.

A similar distinction between 'active' and 'passive' seems to have played a role in various Asian societies, or so it seems from Adrian Carton's (Sydney's Macquarie University) piece about Asian cultures (China, Japan, India), at least insofar as it discusses initiation and boy prostitution. In different periods in Chinese history there was a strong association between theatre (the exclusive domain of men) and same-sex relations. The actors who played women's roles had a subservient status. Women were subservient to men in most Chinese societies anyway. Carton thinks that the fact that all sexuality was closely guarded is the explanation for female love being kept out of his sight, apart from in some beautiful illustrations. It wouldn't surprise me if in the next few years much more information about women's same-sex experiences in Asian countries becomes available, following on the inaugural lecture of Saskia Wieringa on *The Admonishment of Vegetarian Great Aunt. Reflections on Sexual and Gender Multiplicity and Culture* at the inauguration of the chair Gender and Women's Same-Sex Relations Cross-culturally at the University of Amsterdam in April 2007. (See more on the Professor Wieringa's research elsewhere in this publication.)

In the last chapter of Aldrich's book, Gert Hekma (University of Amsterdam) offers a picture of the changes in homosexuality since the 1980s due to the influence of AIDS, globalization, discussion of sexual identities and new political opposition. This is an almost impossible task, which may explain the fact that Hekma uses a minimum of 95 percent of his argument

for describing the vicissitudes of men. And not forgetting young boys, Hekma was complimented by Times reviewer Richard Davenport-Hines: '(Hekma)... intelligently contextualizes the prevalent western hysteria about sexual abuse of children.'

The AIDS disaster also had a positive side, according to Hekma. One of those is the closer collaboration between gays and lesbians. From a Dutch point of view, that seems an understatement, since lesbians were crucial to the organisation of buddy-solidarity, but have got very little attention for the ways in which AIDS has hit women.

Almost at the same time as the English language original (and with almost an identical version) the Dutch edition of Aldrich's book was published in 2006. Both its title and contents seems a little less subtle and lays more stress on male homosexuality than the English original. In order to make it possible for the illustrations to appear on the same pages in both the English and Dutch versions, some parts of the original text have been edited out of the Dutch version, which is a real pity. For me that is reason enough to prefer the English version, but reading at least one is a must.

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Notes

- (1) This is a review of: Aldrich, Robert (ed.) (2006), *Gay Life and Culture. A World History*, London, Thames & Hudson, 384 pages.
- (2) Biological males who assumed the role culturally defined as female.

Homophobia (I)

Leontine Bijleveld

Homophobia is a phenomenon that the reader of this publication will keep encountering. Byrne Fone, US pioneer in the field of Gay Studies, has devoted an extensive book to this theme in 2000 entitled *Homophobia: a History*. This book begins its historical overview with the theory that few social groups escape the consequences of prejudice. Homophobia is the last accepted prejudice, at least in modern western society, where racism has been rejected, anti-Semitism condemned and women-hatred has lost its legitimacy.

Fone's opening proposition immediately throws up some limitations in his study that are particularly relevant to this publication. He must not be criticised for omitting the fact that since 9/11 social groups other than gays and lesbians have suffered seriously from intolerance and violence in the US since his book was published in 2000. However he can be criticised for the fact that he limits his studies only to sections of western society.

The term homophobia was only used for the first time at the end of the 1960s. Fone admits that, in that sense, the use of the term in a historical overview from around 600 BC till the end of the 1990s is fairly anachronistic. In the absence of a better term, he uses it to clarify the whole complexity from antipathy against homosexuality and homosexuals (as a term nearly a century older than homophobia), to sodomy-hatred, aversion to 'gentlemen's' love', disapproval of same-sex relations, disgust at effeminates and other like issues. Mentioning only 'male' examples here is no coincidence. Fone suggests that, until recently, lesbians were as good as invisible throughout history. He maintains that he did his utmost best to find examples of historic prejudice against lesbians, but he barely succeeded. Fone reasons that preconceived opinions of lesbians versus preconceived opinions of gays differ as much as sexism against men vis-a-vis sexism against women, so this would require a whole different book on the subject of female homophobia.

This doesn't cut any ice. I think Fone just didn't look that deeply into researching lesbian issues and, for practical reasons such as time and scope, limited himself to male issues. Suzanne Pharr's *Homophobia: A weapon of Sexism* appeared at the end of 1988 (re-published in 1997). That the root of homophobia lies in sexism is what James Baldwin argued in 1949, as summarised at the beginning of chapter 21 (p. 395). But Fone doesn't do anything with Baldwin's analysis. His book is, in fact, more descriptive than analytical or explanatory.

Fone's *Homophobia* chronologically documents the hostile stance of western culture against same-sex practises, love and relations between men, starting in ancient Greece and ending with an epilogue focused on modern times, although restricted to the US. A lot has already been written on the history of homosexuality, but the history of homophobia has had much less systematic attention, he states. He claims to sketch the social, religious, legal, political, moral and philosophical dimensions of homophobia through the ages.

But such a broad range could not be completely covered in the book. Sometimes he seems

to lose the focus on homophobia - for example in the chapter entitled *'Modern Ethics'*, where the works of John Addington Symonds, Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis are discussed at length. It is apparent from the 38 pages of notes that the author has based his work on an enormous number of historical studies into subjects that include pederasty, sodomy and homosexuality in different western countries. Unfortunately, there is no literature list, so it is not immediately apparent that Fone refers only to English language publications. This is perhaps understandable for an American researcher, but it is a pity. *Tabu Homosexualität. Die Geschichte eines Vorurteils*, by Gisela Bleibtreu-Ehrenberg (1978) is one of the first general studies on the history of homosexual repression in relation to homophobia and this is an example of a non-English language publication that is not mentioned in Fone's book. In her book Bleibtreu gives a lot of attention to the correlation in certain eras and certain countries between homo-hunts and witch hunts and this is completely missing in Fone's work.

The starting point of the book is ancient Greece, depicted mostly as a society in which relations and sex between men, or men and adolescent boys, were associated with the highest moral values. Fone shows, however, that there were already traces of homophobia, for example, in a more negative attitude to men who remained exclusively the passive partner and who thus were deemed to behave in an 'effeminate' manner. He points to a connection with the subservient position of women. The ancient Greeks viewed paedophilia with just as much disgust 'as we do today' - the only reference to paedophilia in his book. Homosexual behaviour was also accepted in Roman times, within conventional sexual and social borders. Only since the spread of christianity did homosexuality come to be considered a greater problem.

I found *'Inventing Sodom'* (part two) one of the most interesting and current sections of the book. It convincingly argues that, in the centuries around the time of christ, the Old Testament story of Sodom and Gomorra became gradually interpreted as a biblical condemnation of homosexual practises. Interpretation of other parts of the Old Testament that came to be taken as anti-gay, are also cleverly reconstructed. It is often pointed out that the Old Testament contains at least as many terrible pronouncements on women as the koran. Some things have been positively corrected, in particular the gospel according to Paul. It is noteworthy that the three most explicitly negative references to male same sex activity are all to be found in chapters ascribed to Paul. This was embedded in the condemnation of sexual pleasure, because Paul believed, along with other christian writers, ascetics and Jewish scribes, that sex was only intended for procreation. Paul was also the first to write negatively about women who, in a sexual sense, exchanged the natural for the unnatural. According to Fone, this can be interpreted initially as a condemnation of sexually active women (whether or not engaged in same-sex activities) as women were expected to be passive sexual partners. In the fourth century the definitive stamp 'condemnation of sex between women' was put on the interpretation of Paul's words.

The next chapters of the book give a detailed description of the developments and shifts in attitudes towards homophobia by christians. How and why the initial tolerance of same-sex practices in Jewish society or Judaism turned into intolerance and condemnation, at least in the Jewish orthodox faith, remains a closed topic for discussion, however. Regarding christianity, Fone shows not only the developments and shifts of attitudes in the Roman Catholic

and Byzantine churches, but also in the Protestant church. Catholics and Protestants have been strongly divided on almost all topics of christian doctrine, but in their animosity toward sodomy they have been remarkably unanimous. However, this never stopped them from accusing each other of heresy and sodomy. Fone's book, *Homophobia*, documents in detail the introduction of legal penalisation and prosecution for homosexual actions (whether or not restricted to men), the shift from church to state (and back), from sin to illness and crime (and back again) in several western countries. A constant factor seems to be that homosexual practices were mostly assumed to take place between those on the 'enemy side' - i.e. heathens, heretics or people of different beliefs (muslims, jews, protestants, catholics, etc.) and those of a differing political class or other socio-economic background. Sometimes they are described as antagonists, sometimes as sodomites, homosexuals etc., and occasionally are even accused of causing natural disasters. Numerous historical examples from various western countries are cited. Insulting police officers by calling them gay falls into the same category, in fact. In 2007, some police officers in the Netherlands reported experiencing this and the public prosecutor along with some judges declared it a punishable offence. This shows that homophobia has not fully disappeared from the minds of the public, although, of course, pyres and gallows fall into a different category of homophobia.

Visibility - © Flickr / RandomlyRoaming



We have the dubious honour in the Low Countries of having registered the first public execution in the area: in 1292 John de Wettre of Ghent was burnt on the pyre. Not long afterwards the Order of the Templars was eradicated with Papal approval (beginning of the fourteenth century): the Templars, captured by the French king, confessed the most terrible sins after torture, mostly involving sodomy. They would then be executed and their possessions handed over to the French king. In recent times the Templars have been rehabilitated by the Vatican and, in fact, been cleared of their deadly sins. Dutch newspapers write about 'alleged sodomy'.

Fone notes that the inquisition of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries - especially in Spain - prosecuted both heretics (among them muslims and jews) and sodomites. This was due, he explained to the relative tolerance that was obtained in regard to same-sex practices when southern parts of Spain were still politically or culturally influenced by muslims. This brings up the question of when muslims and islamic exegetists turned from tolerance to intolerance regarding homosexual practices. Unfortunately the author doesn't bring this up even though it is a very specific and important paradox in islam.

The fact that Byrne Fone had to limit himself is legitimate and understandable and doesn't detract from the significance of the book. However, it is incomprehensible that *Homophobia* doesn't mention at all the prosecution of homosexuals by the Nazis. It seems unthinkable that the author could not find any English publication on this topic. The fact that the last chapters, and indeed almost everything he has written on the twentieth century, are based in the New World is no excuse.

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Notes

- (1) This is a review of: Fone, Byrne (2000), *Homophobia: a History*. New York, Picador / Henry Holt & Company, New York, 421 p.

Lesbian Identity and Sexual Rights in the South: an Exploration

Saskia Wieringa

Lesbian women, or women in same-sex relations as I commonly call them, are among the most abjected people in the South. Their histories are frequently denied them, under the pretext that lesbianism is a western invention. Their citizenship is at times virtually suspended, as in cases where it is said that homosexuality is un-African. Their sexuality is variously classified as unnatural, sick (so psychiatric treatment is prescribed) or deviant. Yet women's same-sex relations have existed in many places of this world, as far as we know, and there are many ways in which present-day women live their relations with other women. In this article I will give an historic example of a community of women in same-sex relations before discussing various forms of present-day communities.

First a note on terminology. The female-bodied persons that are the topic of discussion here display such a broad range of behaviours and identities that it is difficult to find a label that encompasses all those aspects. What concept can do justice to the fluid, complex, contingent population that is the topic of this article? The boundaries of this group are constantly shifting, as they are being defined and redefined in constant processes of in-and exclusion, both by the heterosexual normative majority as by the marginalised non-normative female-bodied persons themselves. The term Women Having Sex with Women, WSW, is coming in vogue now, following the commonly used term MSM, Men having Sex with Men. This term gained popularity in the wake of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, where it became important to investigate sexual networks. However, this debate mostly passed women by, as they were considered to be, and considered themselves as being at less risk. But what to do with women who identify as lesbian but have sex with men or who don't have sex at all? Or with women who are in a same-sex relation but deny that their loving has a sexual aspect? I usually use the term women's same-sex relation, but that may exclude those who are in a heterosexual relation and have occasional sex with a woman partner and who may consider the latter relationship as being more important. Another critical issue is what is considered 'sex'. Often the term is exclusively reserved for penile penetration. It is clear that women have a wide range of other techniques at their disposal. (1) Here I will use both terms, WSW and women in same-sex relations, interchangeably, aware of their limitations. I will use the term 'lesbian' only for women who identify themselves as such.

State of the Art

Although most women in the South who are in same-sex relations live in societies that marginalise and abject them, it is important to realize that in certain historical and cultural

constructs women were (and still are) able to carve out a niche in which their relationships with other women were accepted to a more or lesser degree. In general these women did / do not identify as lesbian; in some cases we don't know whether their relationships were actually sexual. This by the way may tell more about the inhibitions and sloppiness of their researchers, who never bothered to ask the relevant questions. (Wieringa, 2005c) Only in the case of the traditional butch-femme communities some of them engage in struggles for sexual rights. Examples of institutionalised women's relationships are the Chinese sisterhoods, the African women marriages, the Bugis *calalai* and their women partners. (Wieringa, 2007a) Other situations in which female-bodied persons could enter into relations with women is that of those North American native tribes who recognize the existence of two-spirit people (Lang, 1999; Roscoe, 1998), the Surinamese creole *mati* relationships analysed by Wekker (2006) or the Japanese *onabe*. (Wieringa, 2007b) Anthropology has long been haunted by what Blackwood and I called 'Sapphic Shadows', the silence on women's same-sex relations, the colonial and post-colonial misrepresentations of the core elements of those relations, the denial of the erotic. (Blackwood & Wieringa, 1999a) Especially after World War II it was simply 'not done' for an anthropologist to study the topic. (2) I will here give two examples of the cultural dimensions of these communities, the anti-marriage sisterhoods in China and the women marriages in Africa.

Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade, Johannesburg, 1999 - © Joanne Bloch



From around the middle of the nineteenth century so-called 'Orchid Societies' existed in the Pearl River Delta of Guangdong (formerly spelled as Canton), a province in Southern China. Women who joined these anti-marriage associations were mostly silk workers. They vowed never to marry a man and engaged in sworn sisterhood relations with other sisters. Though the sources are not always clear, the women engaged in emotional, erotic and / or sexual bonds. Due to their income they could afford to live independent lives. In cases where, at a very young age, they had been promised in marriage to a man, they might even contribute to the households of their former fiancées, even when these men would have married other women. (3) The ceremonies in which they pledged loyalty to each other knew several elements that also took place in heterosexual marriages, such as the hairdressing ceremony. The vow of spinsterhood ensured that a sister's soul would be worshipped after her death and would not come back as a Hungry Ghost to bother the family of her birth. (4)

If a sister was forced to keep the promise made on her behalf when she was still a child, to marry a man, she would only be accepted back in the spinsterhood if she had not consumed anything and returned within three days. Or the other sisters might sew her into a suit. If she came back with her suit intact she was again accepted in their midst. (Topley cited in Raymond, 1986) They lived in pairs (as sworn sisters) or groups in spinsters' houses or in Taoist vegetarian halls or monasteries. Buddhism was an important inspiration, particularly the veneration of the androgynous deity Guan Yin. (Topley, 1975; Chafetz & Dworkin, 1986) This bodhisattva is a female manifestation of the male god Avalokiteshvara. The depression of the 1920s affected the silk industry severely and many sisters went off to the cities to become domestic servants. (Honig, 1985; Sankar, 1986) Up until the beginning of the 1980s I saw some of them, the black-and white *amahs*, in Singapore. (Wieringa, 1987) After the Maoist victory the sisterhoods were branded as 'feudal remnants'. Many sisters ended up in the Chinese diaspora, and fled to Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan. (Sankar, 1986; Topley, 1975)

What allowed these women to choose a life on their own, in patriarchal China? First industrialization gave them the opportunity to earn an income. Secondly, Buddhism stimulated heterosexual chastity and purity. Also, the monasteries offered sisters a religious and political career as well as economic independence. Religion also offered a justification for sexual relationships among the women. It was sometimes said that if one had found one's true love, the partners would continue to search for each other after their deaths. In case both of them were reincarnated as women, their love would still thrive. (Raymond, 1986) Thirdly there was a tradition of women having their own cultural traditions, for instance in poetry and music. Unmarried girls would also sleep together and be educated in girls' houses. (Topley, 1975; Sankar, 1986) Then, several commentators noted that the Taiping rebellion in which many women had taken the side of the rebels, had left a legacy of strong, militant womanhood. (Croll, 1978; Raymond, 1986) (5) Some of these elements are still relevant today. Another striking phenomenon is the fluidity of their relations, from emotional bonding to strongly erotic love. In this case however the erotic was clearly incorporated within the range of emotional expressions.

African Women Marriages

African (former) presidents like Moi (Kenya), Nujoma (Namibia) and Mugabe (Zimbabwe) are known for their homophobic statements and their accusations that homosexuality is a recent western import. (Morgan & Wieringa, 2005) Historical and anthropological data however indicate that it was homophobia that was introduced by the western colonial powers into those African societies in which particular forms of women's or men's same-sex behaviours or relations were practised in more or less institutionalised ways. Apart from female husbands formally wedding their wives, other forms of women's same-sex practices and relations have been documented, such as initiation rites, girls' erotic play such as the elongation of the labia, mummy-baby relationships at school and other bond friendships. (6) For instance young women who pledged to become each other's *oumapanga* among the Damara or Ovaherero of present day Namibia might engage in sexual relations. Their elders approved of these friendships also when it concerned daughters of chiefs. The anthropologists who described the institution however were shocked and named these relations 'perverse' (Karsch Haack, 1911, p. 472) or a 'terrible vice' (ibid, p. 475-476). Though it was also noted that these women (who would also be married heterosexually), 'would help each other until death', surely a laudable intention.

Formal, institutionalised women marriages have been documented for over forty of Africa's 200 societies, all of them patrilineal. (Tietmeyer, 1985) (7) In what I call the 'dependent' women marriages a woman married another woman on behalf of some male who didn't have offspring, for instance her own husband, or her deceased son. The children of these marriages would belong to the lineage of that male. In the 'independent' women marriages a woman desired to have male offspring of her own who would honour her as their ancestor. This usually concerned rich and / or powerful women, such as traders or healers. The only way to ensure that they could establish a compound of their own in which they would be honoured as its founder, was to live on through being the (social) father of sons. They would decide who would be the genitor of those children (a genitor might get a present for his services or he might keep a more informal link with his offspring). Women marriages thus contracted were fully institutionalised. (Wieringa, 2005c; see also Herskovits, 1937) A female husband would pay the customary bride price for her wife or wives (polygyny was possible). The female husband would be honoured and served by her wife as any male husband in that society would. The few accounts of the dynamics of such relations however indicate that those relations were more egalitarian than heterosexual marriages.

Women marriages are in decline. Modern inheritance laws, based as they are on European laws, generally do not recognise the claims of the children to the wealth of their female fathers. In South Africa however, Zulu women healers, *sangomas*, are still known to marry so-called ancestral wives (Nkabinde & Morgan, 2005) and the practice doesn't seem to be on the decline. The rationale is that their dominant ancestor is a male who requires a wife to please him. If the *sangoma* is a woman herself she then marries a wife as her dominant ancestor demands. In the rich description Nkabinde and Morgan (2005) provide of such female-bodied *sangomas* in same-sex relations the sexual attraction of the *sangoma* herself to her ancestral wife is more prominent than the religious rationale of the relationship might suggest.

I cannot do justice here to the complexities of African women marriages, apart from men-

tioning two more issues. In several African societies spiritual strength (for instance in fertility rituals) may be associated with the combination of female and male elements: fertility idols with both male and female genitals, women possessed by male spirits or the reverse. That is, there are instances when the binary split between the sexes is not upheld. Secondly women's economic and physical power is assessed positively. Among the Fon for instance (in present day Benin) women marriages were widely known, while their women armies brought many victories to their kings. (Herskovits, 1937; Blackwood & Wieringa, 1999b) Interestingly the *mati* relationships that Wekker describes for Suriname are characterized by similar patterns. (Wekker, 2006)

Traditionally African women's same-sex relations are accommodated within a heterosexual marriage model. Major identity markers may be social status, wealth, spiritual power, rather than the sex of one's partner. Traditional women's same-sex relations may thus give rise to interesting discussions on the conceptualization of sex and gender, of sexual agency and identity, and of gender and sexual multiplicity. 'Independent' women marriages could exist in a situation in which the female husbands were independently wealthy, in societies in which gender was determined by who one married (being a contributor of bride price entitled one to the status of husband) and by a spiritual system that could incorporate gender multiplicity, provided the appropriate rituals were performed.

Modern-day Marginalised Women in Same Sex Relations

I will now turn to modern-day more marginalised women in same-sex relations. It is clear that the distinction between these two groups (institutionalised versus marginalised) is a tenuous one, with the modern butch-femme (b/f) communities straddling the divide. These groups have survived the silence and invisibility into which they were forced by societies characterized by hetero-normative patterns of relations. In order to be accepted by the wider society the partners in a butch-femme relationship patterned their relationship also after this model. Ironically the rise of modern middle class rights-based lesbian groups shatters the silence behind which the partners in a more traditional butch-fem community could hide and exposes the same-sex sexuality of their relation. This may lead to ostracism and violence. Willingly or unwillingly they are drawn into the orbit of the rights-based groups. A similar development occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the West, where the 'old lesbians' as the b/f groups were called, were replaced by younger more militant lesbians fighting for sexual rights. (Wieringa, 1999)

The present-day situation as far as women in same-sex relations in the global South is concerned is complex. There are multiple forms in which women live their desires, divided by class, religion, ethnicity, legal system, political culture and gender regime. The present-day discourses on women in same-sex relations are rather inadequate to capture this wide variety of practices, desires and identities.

Just to give an idea of the diversity of lifestyles of women in same-sex relations, I will list some of the categories I have come in contact with in Jakarta: upper class chique women who quietly live their own lives, and meet in networks of friends; lonely isolated women, heterosexually married or not, who don't dare to speak their desires; married women who have done their duty towards their husbands and now follow their own desires, dating a

butch woman; sex workers who have women lovers; internet-savvy young lesbian activists who have set up websites and are actively fighting for women's and sexual rights; lower class butch women with their wives; single women of all classes who have women lovers but don't identify as lesbian; factory workers living in dormitories during the week with their women lovers, and who go back to their male husbands in the weekends or on holidays; women in the drugs scene who have both male and female lovers, on and on.

This list, inadequate though it is, is important, as it indicates that only the younger middle class lesbian activists are more or less out and visible. Secondly it is clear that there is much isolation and silence surrounding many of these women, and that many of them are only known to their close friends. Their social and sexual contacts take place in small circles, that sometimes overlap. This means that these women may be overlooked by researchers and activists. Unlike their male counterparts women in same-sex relations don't engage in cruising in parks or in public toilets, they don't even go much to bars to my knowledge, as these are expensive and therefore inaccessible to most women, and if they go they may be invisible even there.

Among the better researched same-sex communities are urban women living in b/f relations. In various Asian and African countries (such as Thailand, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Uganda, South Africa and Namibia) self-styled b/f communities exist. The butch partners, variously called Tommy Boys (Uganda, see Nagadya & Morgan, 2005), lesbian men (Namibia, see Khaxas & Wieringa, 2005), Toms (Thailand, see Sinnott, 2007), TB (Hongkong, see Lai, 2007), or in Indonesia Tomboi (Blackwood, 1999) or nowadays butchy (Wieringa, 2005a), to different degrees assume the dress codes, behavior, occupations and other paraphernalia of men in their societies. The femme partners, called Dees (from lady) in Thailand, or TBG (Tomboy's Girl) in Hong Kong, or just 'wives' (*isteri*) in Indonesia to all outward appearances assume the female role that is accepted in their societies. Sometimes also indigenous terminology is used, such as *sentul* and *kantil* in Indonesia.

The masculine partners demonstrate different degrees of masculinity. Some reject femininity altogether and feel they are men trapped in women's bodies, or that they have male souls in women's bodies. In such cases the use of the term 'female-bodied' is more appropriate than 'women'. However stereotypically gendered the outward appearance of such couples may be, the research mentioned above indicates much more complexity in their gendered subjectivities. In Indonesia now some of them proudly call themselves '*feminist butches*'.

The urban b/f cultures have different fates under the impact of globalization. In Lima for instance they are being marginalised both by hetero-normative society and by feminist lesbians; in Indonesia too they live a liminal existence, though middle class rights-based lesbian groups have incorporated segments of the b/f culture. This only became possible after a careful process in which the lesbian groups had to give up the arrogance of their politically correct feminist stance ('we are fighting patriarchy while you are following a hetero-normative pattern'). The b/f partners accepted the feminist position of the middle class lesbians and held extensive discussions about the need for feminism also within b/f relations.

Whether it is due to the colonial legacy of homophobia or to what I called elsewhere 'post-colonial amnesia' (Wieringa, 2005b), women's same-sex communities are under pressure. The relative tolerance for transgender relations that used to exist in large parts of south east Asia and in Africa has given way to more overt forms of intolerance. In societies in which transgender relations used to be accepted, colonial power holders introduced the

homophobia by which Europe was characterized at the time. Post-colonial leaders, who have denounced so many aspects of racism and prejudice imposed by their former colonial masters have on the whole accepted their heterosexist biases. The nostalgia with which post-colonial leaders re-invented certain aspects of their past never included tolerance for transgender relations.

In Indonesia women in same-sex relations for a long time have been able to hide to a certain extent behind the layers of public silence on sexuality. In other countries such as Uganda even that is not possible. Silence both hides and protects but it also invisibilizes and isolates. The modern sexual rights campaigns can therefore have diverse effects. Through the use of internet middle class younger lesbians are discovering themselves and the wider lesbian world around them. They find support for their campaigns on the web and can use it for their internal discussions. It breaks their isolation. The web has thus become an important medium for consciousness raising and advocacy. However there are also large groups of women who don't want to be outed as having a sexual relationship with another woman. The increased visibility of the younger lesbian activists may also make the sexual aspects of women who prefer to go through their lives as 'just friends' visible. This may endanger them. However disturbing this is, it seems an inevitable consequence of a struggle that cannot be avoided.

Conclusion

The internet-savvy middle class, educated young lesbians are the most visible women having same-sex relations. In many countries they are setting up websites or email lists. They are busy raising the consciousness of their constituents, they are conducting advocacy programmes, often in cooperation with other human or sexual rights groups and sometimes they are engaged in research. The international human, women's and sexual rights instruments that have been developed in the wake of the major UN conferences of the 1990s (for instance the 1995 Fourth Women's World Conference in Beijing) and that have more recently been expanded into for instance the Yogyakarta Principles of 2006 are major tools for their struggles. They are faced with multiple constraints, but if they are able to forge alliances with other human and women's rights groups their struggles may lead to the granting of sexual rights to LGBT people in general in the long run. In the short run however their activities may lead to increased lesbophobia. Simply because they alert people to the possibility of women having sex with each other, they may inadvertently 'out' women who so far could hide the nature of their relationship. Historical research that breaks through the amnesia with which present day post-colonial leaders try to ignore past transgender and same-sex practices may also lead to greater tolerance.

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Notes

- (1) See the discussion on female friendships by for instance Faderman (1980). In the two anthologies Evelyn Blackwood and I published, (1999 *Female Desires*, 2007 *Women's Sexualities and Masculinities in Asia*, with Abha Bhaiya) there are also some examples of this phenomenon.
- (2) See *Sapphic Shadows* (Blackwood and Wieringa 1999) for an account how the anthropologists Evans-Pritchard and Van Lier decided only to publish their findings on women's same-sex relations after their retirement.
- (3) In Japan Kannon (who entered the country as the female Guan Yin, is presented as an androgynous figure, but nowadays is usually venerated as a male god (Wieringa, 2007).
- (4) See Tsukiyama (1991) for an intimate, well-researched literary account of the lives of these 'women of the silk.
- (5) See Sang (2003) for a study on the making of the Chinese lesbian identity from the early twentieth century onwards.
- (6) See Wieringa (2005c) for a short overview of the major forms women's same-sex relations took in Africa.
- (7) African societies are characterized by a great variety of kinship patterns, including matrilinearity and bilinearity.

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The Emancipation of Transgenders

Thomas Wormgoor

In the gay emancipation Statement released in November 2007 by the Dutch Department of Education, Culture and Science, attention has been paid to transgenders for the first time in history. COC Nederland deserves credit for this. The COC involved transgender organisations in preparing the joint advice concerning homosexual emancipation that was presented to the government after its first hundred days in office. The COC also set out to represent the interests of transgenders. (About the COC see Note 5 in the Introduction.)

The Netherlands has known national transgender organisations for over 25 years, so one might wonder why it took till 2007 before transgenders became part of a government emancipation Statement and why the COC's involvement was necessary to achieve this. One can also ask what emancipation entails, in the context of deviant gender identity, and if the emancipation effort of homosexuals and transgenders fit within one organisation.

Facts and Terms

The term *transgender* has only recently come into use in the Netherlands. On the one hand it is used as a collective term for all forms of deviant gender identities. On the other hand, the term is used to indicate a third category next to transvestites and transsexuals; that is, people who are not compatible with their physical gender, but who do not feel transvestite or transsexual either. In this article I use the term transgender in the first meaning. If different I will state that specifically.

Transsexuals are those who usually from a very young age feel a gender identity other than their physical birth gender. Since the 1960's, it has been possible to undergo gender reassignment surgery in the Netherlands. Currently, there are two acknowledged gender centres, the Medical Centre of the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam and the University Medical Centre in Groningen. Both centres are allowed to diagnose transsexuality and treat patients with hormones and gender reassignment surgery. Although transsexuals often look for alternative treatments abroad, there are fairly accurate figures of treated transsexuals in the Netherlands; currently there are approximately 4,000: two-thirds women born in a male body and one-third men born in a female body.

Transvestites feel a strong urge to dress and present themselves as a person of the opposite sex. Traditionally, we speak about men who dress as women. The degree to which this urge is felt and the meaning it has in life is individual. In this article I will speak about those transvestites who have a gender identity problem. There are no accurate figures available about transvestites in the Netherlands. It may be assumed that this group is significantly larger than transsexuals.

About the third group, *transgenders in the specific meaning*, even less is known. There are peo-

ple who do not feel one hundred percent man or one hundred percent woman. The way in which they express their gender identity differs and so does the way in which they express their non-gender perception in language. Some feel they are between sexes, some feel they are in a completely different category for which no term has been created yet and some feel they are a combination of both sexes. Sometimes the term 'queer' is used. The term 'queer' can also be considered a political statement. The criticism of the hetero standard and the binary gender model is enlarged to result in denouncing every identity standard. Radical queers see a common basis in all forms of discrimination. This is categorising people and then including or excluding them. They detect gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual phobias, and are against sexism and genderism. Also against racism, unjustified violence, age discrimination and economic injustice. (1)

At this moment we know little about these groups. The question is if we can clearly distinguish between them. This applies to all classifications of transgenders. We see that people switch from one 'group' to another 'group' during the course of their life. Is this a result of increasing self-recognition, increasing pressure due to suffering, or an actual changing gender-identity? And what is the role of social acceptance in realising one form of expression as opposed to the other?

The *Transgender Netwerk Nederland* started as a national cooperative body. Initiatives to take on themes or projects can come from any of the participants. Although the network has been a foundation since the end of 2008, it is still in the formative stage. There is a distinction between members and affiliate members. The network forms a good representation of the various gender groups. All participants have their own rank and file and differ in history, objectives and manifestation. The participants agree that it is important and valuable to join forces. Actively involved organizations are:

- Landelijke Kontaktgroep Travestie & Transseksualiteit (*National Contact Group Transvestitism & Transsexuality*)
- Queer collectief De Noodles (*Queer Collective - The Noodles*)
- Transvisie, centrum voor genderdiversiteit (*Transvisie, centre for gender diversity*)
- Stichting T-Image (*T-Image Foundation*)
- Transman.nl (*webportal Transman.nl*)

Transgenders in the Gay Emancipation Statement

The gay emancipation Statement of November 2007 states in its introduction that homosexuals, also means transgenders. (2) Transgenders are specifically mentioned on page 24 and a definition of the term is given. It also states that the government realises it knows little about the demands and needs of this group. For this reason the department of Education, Culture and Science will contribute to the Transgender Netwerk Nederland for the purpose of clarifying the demands of transgenders and disseminating knowledge regarding transgenders to relevant professionals.

Lack of knowledge about transgenders in the Statement is illustrated by the definition that was chosen. This definition includes intersexuals. This is incorrect. Intersexuality is a physical disorder that has bodily consequences. Many disorders are considered intersexual. At birth, it is not always clear to which sex an intersexual person belongs. If a 'wrong' decision

is made, someone can develop a gender identity problem, but intersexuality is not a gender identity disorder.

The Emancipation of Transgenders

Emancipation objectives are in order wherever a lack of justice and equality is experienced. It is conceivable that a group of people is discriminated against without this group realising it. Thus, there will be no emancipation movement within this group. In order for an emancipation movement to develop there must be discrimination as well as an awareness that this discrimination is unjustified. In other words, there must be both objective and subjective components. In my opinion, transgender emancipation will develop along the same lines as gay emancipation. As long as the majority of people experiences the deviant identity as a personal fate, often accompanied with strong feelings of guilt and shame, there is no space for an emancipation movement. They look for their own way to combat oppression. Contact with people with similar problems is usually appreciated, but takes place in seclusion. Perhaps, theoretically, visibility to the outside world is considered ideal, but nobody wants to 'sacrifice' his or her privacy for this purpose. The individual that expresses his or her identity has to consider ambivalent feelings from their own circles. In the 1970's, mothers would tell their gay sons: 'As long as you do not become like Albert Mol...' (3), unfortunately, another example was usually not available. Although admitting to homosexuality is still some undertaking, and fear and shame is still present, there will be very few people (4) who do not know what homosexuality is in the Netherlands. There are, for example, many openly gay and appreciated celebrities on television.

I think that, until recently, the subjective condition for an emancipation movement for transgenders was not yet met: being transgender was experienced as a personal fate, their own burden. The thought of expressing their inner feelings was often accompanied with fear and shame. Initially, Kelly van der Veer was a role model for many young transgenders. During her status as a celebrity, she developed in a certain direction, turning from role model to anti model. There is a high probability that mothers tell their sons who want to be a girl: 'As long as you don't get as cheap as Kelly...' (5)

But significant changes are taking place. There is now far more respectful and positive attention to young children that are strongly gender dysphoric. Parents are opening up to the idea that their child may be gender dysphoric, where in the old days the reaction would have been one of incomprehension, rejection and oppression. Young children can go to the Medical Centre of the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam for diagnosis and treatment. Recently, medical journals have paid attention to different groups of transgenders. Also, transsexuals without problems who are accepted in their 'new' gender, choose more and more to express themselves as transsexuals in order to achieve more openness and acceptance.

The T-Image Foundation organises a transgender film festival in the Balie in Amsterdam every two years. Queer collective 'de Noodles' organises an annual wreath-laying at the Homomonument in Amsterdam on May 4th to remember those who died as a result of their gender expression. The National Kontaktgroep Travestie en Transseksualiteit organised an open day for policy makers, health care professionals, family and anyone who was interested for the first time on March 1, 2008. On 11 November, 2007 a festival took place in Amsterdam

for transgenders and all their loved ones which was visited by approximately 500 people. (6) This festival also sparked positive reports in the media.

This is just a selection of the initiatives and developments which indicate that the self-awareness of transgenders is increasing significantly. In all fairness, the COC was necessary to make the connection with the emancipation mandate of the government. But luckily there was a Transgender Netwerk Nederland ready to take the baton.

Transgender Emancipation versus Gay Emancipation

In spite of the assumption of a similar emancipation history it is also important to reflect on the actual similarities and differences between the social situation of transgenders and homosexuals. This will be of substantial importance in determining how the gay and transgender movements ought to relate in the future. Is the similarity of the objectives such that one LGBT movement would be the most logical? Or is the situation of transgenders so different that there is a threat of specific objectives getting lost within a larger movement?

The debate on this subject is just getting started in the Netherlands. In this, I limit myself to an overview of the relevant similarities and differences and a careful conclusion.

Similarities:

- In the case of homosexuality and transsexuality/gender dysphoria, it is in fact all about identity, expressing an identity that is not self-evident. In both cases it is a question of introspection, feelings of 'being different' during childhood, a point of coming out and often initial denial. Homosexuals as well as transgenders, acting from a state of denial, can get married and have children. Coming out can be accompanied by feelings of guilt and shame. In some circles the taboo on being different is bigger than in others. Generally speaking, the admission of being gay in the Netherlands is accepted more lightly than being transsexual/gender dysphoric.
- The emancipation Statement mentions a policy objective of stimulating social acceptance of homosexuality. Signals that are mentioned are incidents of violence against homosexuals. Unfortunately, in this aspect there is also a clear similarity between homosexuality and transsexuality/gender dysphoria to report. Transgenders are attacked in the street, provoked in their immediate area, called names and stared at. Many become isolated and also lose contact with family and loved ones. Although transsexuality is rarely mentioned as a reason for dismissal, many transgenders have problems finding or keeping a job.

Differences:

- Unlike homosexuals, transgenders often need a medical procedure to enable them to fully express their identities.
- Transsexuality has, in spite of the term, nothing to do with sexuality. Homosexuality occurs amongst transsexuals, but the majority is heterosexual.
- The identity of a transsexual is usually the 'new' gender; those who went from man to woman are women and those who went from woman to man are men. Most transsexuals do not identify themselves as transsexual and prefer to keep their transsexual

past to themselves.

- In contrast to homosexuals, transgenders need legal stipulations to confirm their identity. The possibility of officially changing sex is of huge importance for transgenders
- Although statements about figures have a speculative character, at this point we can safely say that the number of transgenders in the Netherlands is many times smaller than the number of gays, lesbians and bisexuals. The chance of running into a transgender in the immediate family, social circle or career, is very small.

Conclusion

It is fortunate that the debate about 'together' or 'apart' is taking place. My personal opinion is this is the time where transgenders themselves have to come forward with their own agenda and their experiences. In what context this may happen is of lesser importance. There is no place for a rigorous choice between together and apart. In the instance of advocating room for identity expression, it is essential to join forces and to always speak of homosexuality as well as transsexuality with regard to the awareness of personal identities that deviate from the standard. The same applies where it concerns matters such as safety in the street and the struggle against discrimination in the workplace. However, the specific transgender themes can best be introduced and advocated by transgender organisations.

The Present Agenda of Transgender Netwerk Nederland

Improve the social position of transgenders

There are a number of concrete points of improvement that do not have to wait for the results of study:

- Amendment of the Civil Code on the issue of the requirements of an official sex change. These requirements are linked to going through a certain medical procedure which others who also live or want to live as if belonging to the 'other' gender are excluded. In addition, these medical procedures take so long that those who intend to go through the entire procedure are forced to live for years with documents that do not correspond with reality. In this respect the Netherlands is slower to take action than a couple of other EU countries.
- Health care expenses. With the implementation of the new health insurance law, 'mental suffering' as ground for compensation for plastic surgery procedures has been abolished. For transsexuals a few specific principles have been formulated, but in reality these appear to turn out negative, particularly for the man/woman transsexuals. Although some health care insurers do compensate the costs, the pain is mainly in the following points:
 - Exclusion of placing breasts prosthesis (indicated for approx. 2/3 of the man/woman transgenders).
 - No compensation for adjustments of anything that is not a specific gender characteristic. This includes problems with compensation for laser treatments (beard removal as well removal of hair before the surgery), reduction of the Adam's apple, facial adjustments and surgery on the vocal cords.

There is a clear need to transfer knowledge about gender identity in all its forms and consequences to first and second line health care workers. That does not change the fact that general institutions and health care workers in the first line will only incidentally be confronted with gender identity questions. In due time, the network has aspirations to establish one or more category centres in the Netherlands that will provide assistance in case of gender identity questions in the broadest sense. It will be accessible to transgenders, people in their environment and as a possible advisor on health care work and education. Knowledge centres that offer real help.

With regard to improvement of help to transgenders we pursue four objectives:

- Increasing knowledge with regard to gender identity of first and second line health care workers and in education, by creating and distributing appropriate material. We think of a combination of a special website and a direct approach to these professionals and by collaborating with education, training programmes, specialist journals, etc.
- Quantitative and narrative description of the (effect of) activities that are accomplished by the participating network organizations on behalf of transgenders and their environment. Currently most work is done by volunteers, so it is still not visible (enough) to the government and to professional organisations. The description has to result in advice on how to expand this work, using present experience, knowledge, effort, involvement and infrastructure. This advice is intended for cooperating organisations, including the government, to enable them to make collaborative efforts as effective as possible. We assume there is great social benefit to gain with a relatively small financial effort. The description does not have to have a scientific character but must be convincing. The form can be creative or journalistic.
- Based on our own experiences and the work that we have done for years, we already have a fairly good idea about the situation of transgenders in the Netherlands. It is not coincidental that all participants state that there has to be more and better psycho/social offerings for transgenders (and their environment). The time has come to transfer our impressions to well-founded knowledge about the situation and needs of transgenders. In the scope of this project we would like to initiate a solid study in cooperation with the gender teams (Amsterdam and Groningen), the GGZ (mental health care organisations) and private gender therapists. In order to prevent repetition of work there will first be an investigation to find out if there are any studies with the same objective being launched.
- From our own experience we know that within the group of transgenders, other vulnerable groups can be distinguished. For example, there are contacts with transgenders with a mental handicap and transgenders from ethnic cultures that are (still) less tolerant with regard to deviant gender expression. Of a different nature and from my own observation, a clear bottleneck is created by questions from and about children that are raised in a family where one of the parents is, or appears to be, transgender. These groups require extra attention and consultation with partners in the field who have insight on the specific group or have experience with a similar situation. This extra effort has to be included as a component in the three above-mentioned objectives.

For network development we will pursue the following objectives:

- Further establishment of the network. A clear meeting structure, a long-term view and a legal body that is accommodating. It is conceivable that the mutual objectives are, in principle, achieved through the network. The objectives can be summarized as follows:
 - Increase visibility and knowledge about gender identities and expression forms. Approach to health care and education sectors with regard to their signalling function.
 - Collective advocacy (legislation, patient interests, struggle against discrimination at the work place and in public areas).
 - Empowerment of Dutch transgenders.
- Increase accessibility of different organisations by positioning the network as a central source of information. A website and a publicity campaign are to be developed for this purpose. Where necessary, the participating organisations will be assisted to increase their own visibility.

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Notes

- (1) From www.n00dles.nl/genderwiki.
- (2) Interdepartmental Workgroup Government Policy and Homosexuality (IWOH) (2007), *Gewoon homo zijn. Lesbisch en homo-emancipatiebeleid 2008-2011*, (*Just being Gay; Lesbian and Gay Emancipation Policy 2008-2011*), Den Haag. See also: www.minoocw.nl/onderwijs.
- (3) One of the first openly gay men in show business. This actor was mainly cast in very effeminate male gay roles. His best role was, however, being himself on TV.
- (4) This is less applicable to some immigrant groups in the Netherlands and some religious communities.
- (5) Kelly participated in the 'Big Brother' show on Dutch TV. During the show it became clear that she was a transsexual woman. Because of her gorgeous looks and spontaneous behaviour she became a role model, especially for young transsexual women. Later she became involved in too many TV-shows and people started to denounce her as being vulgar and commercial.
- (6) Transfusion Festival. See also: www.transfusionfestival.nl.

Queering Politics, Desexualizing the Mind

Robert J. Davidson

'For Europe, for ourselves, and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new [human].'

Frantz Fanon (1963, p. 316)

'The problem is not to discover in oneself the truth of one's sex but rather to use, from now on, one's sexuality to achieve a multiplicity of types of relations.'

Michel Foucault (1996, p. 204)

This article addresses the identity politics that serve as a base for collective action for many groups active in fighting for LGBT rights and looks at queer theory and queer politics as an alternative to identity based politics. Queer theory is discussed through the work of several prominent queer theorists, as well as in comparison with post-colonial theories. Some suggestions are then made for undertaking a queer politics.

'Queer' does not imply one thing or have one meaning; indeed the radical potential of 'queer' theory and politics lies in the refusal to be limited and defined as one thing. This article will present an interpretation of queer theory that views LGBT identity politics as problematic. The formation of identity based on sexual desire will be analysed in relation to identity politics. Queer theory will be used to demonstrate why the conception of sexual identity and its use as a base for collective action is problematic. Queer theory will also be compared with the critiques proposed by post-colonial theorists that address how knowledge and categorization operate. Suggestions will then be made for a queer politics that can promote ways of thinking and ways of engaging in political action that could effect shifts away from hetero-normative conceptions of sexuality.

Identity Politics

Since the 1960s social movement groups pursuing politics based on a LGBT identity have made many gains, such as the decriminalization of sodomy, anti-discrimination legislation, and increased visibility of LGBT issues. Contemporary social movement theory, however, is re-examining identity as a base for collective action by asking how identity is produced (Melucci,

1996) and how identity politics can be constraining (Blumenfeld, 1999). This prompts an inquiry into how sexual identities have been produced and what the effects have been.

The Birth of Sexual Identities

After the Enlightenment in the West, christian conceptions of sexuality were integrated into 'secular' societies through scientific fields, specifically psychiatry. Michel Foucault argues that in the christian tradition, 'A twofold evolution tended to make the flesh into the root of all evil, shifting the most important moment of transgression from the act itself to the stirrings - so difficult to perceive and formulate - of desire' (1978, p. 19-20). Psychiatry as a social science later replaced the church as the creator of social rules and norms and has a regulating effect on society by using desire to produce knowledge about, and categories of, individuals.

Karl Maria Kertbeny first used the term 'homosexual' to describe one who desires to have sex with someone of the same sex (Kennedy, 1997). Karl Heinrich Ulrichs and Magnus Hirschfeld further theorized 'the homosexual'. Previously, one could only speak of certain acts as either natural or unnatural (Epstein, 1994). After this production one spoke of individuals instead of acts. The production of the category of 'the homosexual' also produced its opposite, 'the heterosexual'.

Despite the good intentions of these early psychiatrists, who lobbied for the decriminalization of sodomy based on the category 'homosexual', 'the homosexual' increasingly became someone to be disciplined and encouraged to become heterosexual. Disciplining homosexuality was enacted through various 'treatments' such as psychoanalysis, hypnosis, and electric shock therapy.

Foucault's concept of power / knowledge can shed light on the abjection and disciplining of homosexuality. Foucault argues that power is inextricably linked with the production of certain forms of knowledge (Foucault, 1980). The ability to regulate 'the homosexual' first required the production of that category. That production is, however, a concept or a myth. This concept of sexual identity is a result of the fixation in the West on sexuality as the secret to one's being. Additionally, 'the homosexual' was created through the lens of heterosexuality. Heterosexuality was the dominant way of being human, and markers of difference, of homosexuality, were sought in mind and body.

Binary Logic and 'The Homosexual' as Other

By splitting sexuality along hetero / homo lines psychiatry reduced all the potentialities of sexuality into two rigid and distinct categories, thus producing a binary. Judith Butler has examined the function of the binary in relation to gender, writing that, 'One is one's gender to the extent that one is not the other gender, a formulation that presupposes and enforces the restriction of gender within that binary pair' (1990, p. 22). If 'male' is dependent upon 'female', these categories are relational and cannot exist independently from one another; the construction of the One requires the construction of the Other. The same goes for 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual', as the production of one category produces and reinforces the Other.

The process of Otherization (of homosexuality) creates a group that is separate and distinct from the One (heterosexuality). Through Otherization heterosexuality is naturalized and shielded with saliency while the Other, homosexuality, is stigmatized. Steven Epstein has theorized that, 'Because homosexual *practices* are widespread but socially threatening, a special, stigmatized category of *individuals* is created so as to keep the rest of society pure' (1994, p. 191). Within this structure the fluidity of sexuality is negated in favour of a conceptual framework that conceptualizes individuals who engage in same-sex sex acts as inherently different from those who engage in heterosexual acts. A study by Günter Schmidt found that over the last thirty years, as the homosexual identity has become increasingly pronounced in Germany same-sex sexual activity among youth has decreased (Schmidt, 2000). The purifying mechanism of the Otherization process appears to be working to stabilize heterosexuality.

Identity-based Politics and its Limits

Identity politics uses one identity, in this case sexual identity, as a point of cohesion for collective action. Sexual identity for political purposes has been conceptualized as an essential component of the self, based upon desire rather than sexual activity. Much of the work of 'gay rights' groups has attempted to gain the rights of the One for the Other by making claims to heterosexual normalcy and respectability for homosexuals. These claims to normalcy and respectability, however, have excluded sex and those who identify with sex from the homosexual community (Warner, 1999). Those who have sex with youths, engage in S/M, go to the baths, or stray too far from the gender behaviour linked to their sex determination (e.g. flaming queens and bull dykes), have been demonized and excluded by much of the LGBT political movement.

Michael Warner has documented how the rise of a desexualized 'LGBT politics' has coincided with governmental attacks on sexual spaces, such as bathhouses, cruising areas, and porno theatres. This has been particularly prominent in New York, as the sex clubs and porno theatres were zoned out of Times Square to dangerous parts of the city in an attempt to put them out of business (Warner, 1999). A failure to embrace sex within LGBT politics and attempts to gain access to the respectability attached to heterosexual normality have left sexual spaces open to attack and resulted in a decrease of the physical spaces available for sexual contact and exploration. These spaces for sexual exploration have been forced into the virtual world of the internet and other media.

These problems result from the attempts of LGBT politics to mimic heterosexual norms and values. Within this model, in-group purification and exclusion will occur, while the non-heterosexual remains the Other. Homi Bhabha cautions against this 'mimicry of man', as these movements are an attempt by the Other to live up to the values of the One (Bhabha, 1994). This will ultimately be unsuccessful, as these identity constructions function within the values and norms dictated by the One and are built upon devaluing the Other.

Promoting the Other only reinforces the distinction between the One and Other and further concretizes conceptions of the One and the Other as separate and distinct groups. The establishment of identity was not effected immediately after its production by psychiatry. Foucault describes a process in which, 'Homosexuality began to speak on its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or "naturalness" be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary,

using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified' (1978, p. 101). The impact is that individuals have embraced the very conceptual tools meant to effect their regulation and disciplining instead of rejecting these modes of thinking.

Sex as the secret of the self, the institutionalized authority of psychiatry, and sexual binaries are particularly western phenomena. Cultures throughout the globe have unique socio-sexual categorization systems and ways of conceptualizing sexuality and its importance. International LGBT political groups have often attempted to export LGBT identities as liberating. Joseph Massad has argued that western promotion of homosexual identities in Arabic countries has led to a hetero-sexualization, as most people will choose to claim heterosexuality when forced to make a choice between labelling themselves as heterosexual or homosexual (Massad, 2007). The colonial mind set of exporting LGBT identities has often led to more problems than solutions because of the Otherization effected through LGBT politics (Woodcock, 2004).

Queer Theory

Queer theory and queer politics have embraced the term 'queer' in an attempt to effect 'an act of linguistic reclamation' (Epstein, 1994, p. 195) and reclaim difference from the sexual norm as positive. Queer theorists have attempted to disrupt the ways sexual knowledge and identity have been produced by emphasizing sexuality as broad and changing, removing desire as the key to explaining the self, and focussing on differences within the sexual identities that have been produced. Some tenets of queer theory are engagement with normalization mechanisms, reflection upon the heterosexual norm, emphasizing difference, and conceptualizing sexuality as fluid. Queer theory is not concerned with explaining who a person is based upon sexual identity but is instead focussed on creating and emphasizing the possibilities for exploring what people *can do*.

Engagement with Normalizing Mechanisms

One aspect of normalization consists of reducing complicated concepts to seemingly simple binaries. Sasha Roseneil argues that, 'Queer theory identifies the homo / heterosexual binary as a central organizing principle of modern society and culture and takes this binary as its key problematic and political target' (2000, 2.1). Queer theory promotes recognizing that the heterosexual / homosexual binary distinction requires such a watering down that the categories are rendered meaningless. Chet Meeks expounds, 'This does not mean that "homosexual" is meaningless but rather that its internal *incoherence* loads it with more meanings, more differences, than the identity itself can ever capture, articulate, or represent' (2001, p. 331). Meeks' critique speaks to the diverse sexual interests and practices within the category 'homosexual', such as S/M, public sex, pederasty, etc.

The distinction between public and private is another problematic binary division for many queer theorists. Meeks has charged that, 'To the extent that a strong division between private and public remains, it counts as a symbolic axis of domination that... helps to maintain a view that sexual relations are private and natural and therefore outside the realm of public,

political considerations' (2001, p. 332). Heterosexuality is public and salient. Explicit sex and homosexuality are private. For example, one comes out of the closet as homosexual, but people do not come out as heterosexual. Homosexuality is the abject category, and heterosexuality is the subject category. Warner challenges the public / private distinction by arguing that the shame of public sex and norms of privacy force sex into the private domain practically (restricting public sex) and politically (making sex absent from political debate) (Warner, 1999; Berland & Warner, 1999).

Reflecting on the Centre; or What is this Thing Called 'Heterosexuality'?

A re-evaluation of the 'centre' is another common element of contemporary queer theory. Arlene Stein and Ken Plummer argue that the most problematic impact of binarities is the focus on the 'Other' without an evaluation of the centre. They charge that identity-based politics, 'Rely on conceptual dualisms that reinforce the notion of minority as "other" and create binary oppositions which leave the "centre" intact' (1994, p. 182).

If homosexuality is a theoretical concept that is based on reduction and simplification, heterosexuality must be as well, according to binary logic. Warner claims, 'Even fairly conventional heterosexual married couples often find that they enjoy anal play, sex toys, sex in public places, S/M, etcetera, and these practices expose them to shame, moralism, and even prosecution in some cases' (1999, p. 37). According to Warner's theorization of heterosexuality many heterosexuals fall outside of the 'penis-in-vagina' norm. The two concepts homosexual and heterosexual were demonstrated to be inadequate based upon Kinsey's studies that showed sexuality to be much more fluid and changing than these two categories would allow (Kinsey, 1948). The impact is that the concept of heterosexuality, like homosexuality, is an abstraction from most people's lived experience. When this heterosexual 'centre' is analysed it is exposed as a myth. The myth of hetero-normativity, however, continues.

This analysis of heterosexuality begins to clarify the impacts of the sexual categories produced by psychiatry. The concepts produced and 'verified' by psychiatry are merely concepts that are abstracted from the lived experience of many individuals, yet these myths have structured the way sexuality is conceptualized by many individuals and societies and enabled a process of Otherization that has naturalized the category 'heterosexual'.

Difference and Anti-Assimilation

The reflection back toward the 'centre' reveals the centre as an empty construct in the same way that analysis of the 'Other' leads to the breakdown of the 'Other' as a standard and fixed category. This has led queer theorists to advocate a politics that embraces difference and rejects assimilation, as there is in effect nothing to be assimilated into. As Nancy Fraser notes, 'The transformative aim is not to solidify a gay identity but to deconstruct human identity; it is, rather, to sustain a sexual field of multiple, debinarized, fluid, ever-shifting differences' (1997, p. 24). The goal is therefore to deconstruct what identity means and how it operates in relation to sexuality.



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Desexualization of the Mind

Queer *theory* can be read as promoting a re-conceptualization of sexuality away from the categories produced by psychiatry. This approach can be compared with Frantz Fanon's concept of the decolonization of the mind. Fanon, like many queer theorists, approached social relations and concepts as constructed elements instead of 'natural' products and was concerned with how those constructions occur and can be altered.

Fanon engaged with colonialism on two levels: the physical and the psychological (Fanon, 1963, 1967). Fanon observed that colonialism functions by imposing its own logic and rationality on the colonized people, and this abstract production enables concrete exploitation and creates submission. Fanon argued that overcoming colonialism requires two steps. The first step is a galvanization around the 'Otherized' identity, which for Fanon, was either Blackness or a national identity. Through the cohesion of this identity Fanon theorized that the colonized can throw out the colonizers, but he found the resulting *negritude* movements lacking, in that they maintained the modes of thinking imposed by colonialism.

Thus, the next and most important step for Fanon entails a rejection of the modes of think-

ing and the very logic imposed by the colonizing body. This step occurs within the minds of those who have experienced colonization. As a psychiatrist, Fanon studied the mental impacts of concepts, ways of thinking, and systems of rationale. This led him to propose that overcoming colonization requires overcoming the ways in which the colonized have been trained to think, which Fanon calls 'the decolonization of the mind'. This 'decolonization of the mind' would be a new conceptualization of the self, which for Fanon would be a new humanism.

'Decolonization of the mind' within the context of new humanism can have interesting implications if compared with queer movements for sexual liberation. Psychiatry can be likened to a body that has, in a way, colonized the minds of individuals by producing a certain logic regarding the association with desire and the self; sex and sexuality; and the division of people into binary categories. Indeed, Timothy Mitchell has argued that to colonize is to impose meanings (Mitchell, 1988). Identity politics can be seen as the galvanization around the oppressed, or colonized, identity in an attempt to throw off the colonizers and create a space for self-determination. As noted previously identity politics has perpetuated binaries and failed to change dominant sexual structures. It is therefore necessary to take the next and most important step, which can be called 'the desexualization of the mind', which would entail a rejection of the entire sexual logic that has been produced through psychiatry. Through this desexualization of the mind it may be possible for individuals to break down binaries to embrace exploration and curiosity and free themselves from the ways in which they have been conditioned to conceptualize themselves and their sexuality. This desexualization is not intended solely for those previously cast into the 'homosexual' camp but has the potential to enable all individuals to deconstruct the ways they have internalized a sexual identity.

The concept of the desexualization of the mind is not to be confused with the critique that identity politics excludes sexual practices. The desexualization of the mind, rather, refers to doing away with the ways of thinking, promoted through psychiatry, that conceptualize sexuality in hetero-normative ways; it is a rejection of sexual concepts in order to explore the possibilities for sexual practices. This highly personal project must be linked to common pursuits for socio-sexual transformation, however, in order to be most effective.

From Queer Theory to Queer Politics

Western LGBT politics has been demonstrated as problematic for future advancements. Identity politics has sought integration within binary sexual constructs and has resulted in a failed 'mimicry of man'. LGBT identities should not be exported, and should also be abandoned within the West. Queer politics does not seek to integrate into dominant cultures but seeks to transform the structures that define, regulate, and discipline sexuality. How can action occur, however, if identity is no longer the base of collective action?

Iris Marion Young proposes a shift away from identity towards viewing series as potential bases for collective action. Young draws on the work of Jean-Paul Sartre to conceptualize a series as, 'A social collective whose members are unified passively by the objects around which their actions are oriented or by the objectified results of the material effects of the actions of others' (1994, p. 724). The concept of the series allows for any number of personal identities to be included within a particular political project. Additionally, the series is goal

specific, which enables series to form political collectives specific to particular areas and objectives. Young conceptualizes the series through a group of people waiting for a bus. The group waiting for the bus is made up of individuals going various places and with various interests. If their bus is continually late or absent, however, they will begin to share a common grievance and may group together in different ways to address the problem. Collective action based on series removes the focus on identity and enables many different individuals to join forces, which can enable more cohesion than bifurcated identity politics. Increasing potentials for cohesion and the size of the collective can increase its efficacy as a bloc.

The hetero-norm remains the standard, and much needs to be done in order to promote queer and sexual liberation. How hetero-normativity needs to be addressed, however, is dependant upon the particular times and spaces of action, but some general avenues for action can be derived from queer theories.

The public / private divide must be addressed. In cases where heterosexuality is the salient norm, groups would do well to expose it as such and create a space for debate and political engagement. Sex education in schools could be an area to pursue this strategy. In many places sex education is based on biology, heterosexuality, procreation, and STI prevention. Debates about shifting the base of sex education towards pleasure, exploration, and forms of bonding outside of the nuclear family model could create vast changes through coming generations.

The public / private divide can also be engaged in relation to public sex. The space for sexual exploration has recently come under attack in many places, and these spaces need to be defended. Space, private (commercial) and public (non-commercial), enables people to put experimentation and curiosity into practice. Public sexual space is particularly important in places where people live in the home with the family or extended family, as there is most often no space for queer sexual exploration within the familial home. In these situations, a homosexual identity would prove meaningless without public space for sexual exploration. Some of the queer groups of the past can contribute to the structures and strategies of future political activism. The late 1980s saw the formation of several explicitly queer groups in the USA, such as Queer Nation, Outrage, and ActUp. These groups emphasized direct action and sought to build affinities with other oppressed groups. Common tactics included play and performance mixed with an in-your-face message (e.g. a kiss-in, or the staging of a mass death in order to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS), as the cultural was engaged as a site of political engagement. The tactics of these groups could serve as loose models for new, creative forms of action.

Conclusion

The queer approach presented promotes an understanding of how sexual identity functions as a method of disciplining and regulation and demonstrates how politics based on identity perpetuate the lacking 'mimicry of man'. A shift away from politics based on sexual identity is therefore necessary. In the push for a 'new humanism', Fanon proposed a revolutionary

reconceptualization of the colonized self. Toward the same aim, perhaps queer theories and politics can effect a revolutionary reconceptualization of the sexualized self. By de-emphasizing sexual identity, desexualizing the mind, and focussing on series as bases for collective action, queer politics might be able to do the work identity-based politics has not been able to do.

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The World Minimized, The Homosexual Maximised?

Gert Hekma

In a global world, the homosexual community is faced with various conflicting tendencies. The most important of these are the emergence of homosexual life and movement in all corners of the globe, and the growing activities of puritan organisations that embitter the life of sexual minorities. An important question concerning homosexual rights is, who are these gays that claim their place under the sun and what rights are they fighting for? I will discuss these four themes of movement and anti-movement, of identities and rights.

Globalization of the Homosexual Movement

The homosexual rights movement that started in 1897 in Germany has spread around the world, slowly at first, but rapidly in the last decade. Up until 1970 these types of organisations only existed in western countries, excluding Spain or Portugal. With the sexual revolution they spread to Latin America, South Africa and South East Asia. Since 1990 such movements sprang up in the countries of Eastern Europe, throughout Asia, and there were even some brave initiatives in black Africa and the Arabic world. In communist China there are no formal organisations, but homosexual initiatives rustle on the Internet, around karaoke clubs and on sports fields. In India the queer movement is booming. In Nepal, politicians debate whether the rights of gays, lesbians and transgender persons must be anchored in the constitution, as in South Africa but this time including transgender people. The *International Lesbian and Gay Association* (ILGA), the *International Gay Lesbian Youth Organisation* (IGLYO) and the *International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission* (IGLHRC) promote the international concerns of the gay movement. A small group of countries (the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands and Canada) and NGOs such as Hivos and Mama Cash in the Netherlands also support gay and lesbian initiatives.

It is not only the gay and lesbian movement, but the entire homosexual community that is flourishing. Gay bars and nightclubs can be found in all corners of the world, from Tokyo, Shanghai and Surabaya to Havana and Paramaribo. Even in environments that do not favour gays, places can be found where gays and lesbians gather. Internet, media and films show homosexuality in many forms, and many young people discover that they are gay or lesbian via these reports and images that are produced in a world that is completely different from their own. All this attention stirs not just gays and lesbians but also their adversaries. The Canadian-Indian movie *Fire*, for example, about the love between two women in India has led to disturbances between police and Hindu nationalists who are opposed to homosexuality. Gays and lesbians ensured they stayed out of view.

Counter Forces

Opposing the gay and lesbian movement is a much more powerful lobby of religious organisations, nationalist parties, states and NGOs, which have adopted positions opposed to sexual human rights. Indeed, there was a powerful bond between former US president, George W. Bush and the 'axis of evil' in the sexual politics area. Christian and Islamic politicians are both opposed to sexual rights for gays, lesbians, sex workers, transgender persons, unwed women and children. Bush, Pope Benedict and Bin Laden created a devil's pact against sexual freedoms, even against erotic frankness, where non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations play an equally pernicious role. Some countries, including the US, use development aid for sexual politics, to fight sex education, abortion and the use of condoms. For UN organisations, children's rights mean protection against sex rather than preparation for sex, and you are a child until you are eighteen. As a result of that policy, youths that make choices other than heterosexual ones are left completely out in the cold. Organisations such as ECPAT and Terre des Hommes, which say they want to protect children, focus vigorously on young sex workers, who often make more money with less effort and risk prostituting themselves than they would working on a farm, in a factory or re-stocking shelves in a supermarket. They prefer to denounce gay prostitution and to exaggerate the number of minors who are (gay) sex workers. These organisations, with the UN in the lead, are strongly orientated to women, marriage and family, and so far offer no recognition whatsoever to gender and sexual diversity. On most levels, sexual citizenship (Hekma, 2004) is no match for the religious citizenship. There is no UN treaty that has included gay rights. Sexual freedom is not guaranteed anywhere, while freedom of religion, even if it is used against others, belongs to the mantra of international rights. Taiwanese researcher Josephine Ho (2008) warns against the broad puritan lobby that is supported by some countries, mostly out of opportunism, to avoid difficult sexual questions.

Diversity of Homosexual Forms of Expression

The third question is what homosexuality is all about. In the West the image people have of gays and lesbians is one of adults that have an almost exclusive preference for their own sex and form a minority. Many people think that that sexual preference is innate; it is nature, according to many gays and lesbians themselves. Persons with such a preference would have no special gender identity. Most heterosexual people feel differently. The most common idea about gay men remains that they are faggots, not real men, while lesbian women are viewed as masculine and sporty. In the past, although many gays and lesbians were eager to find a 'normal' identity, most people accepted the idea that gay men were sissies that did not fancy each other, but fell for real men, machos, soldiers, sailors and construction workers, on stage guaranteed heterosexual, but not off stage. The same was true for lesbians. They were butches who did it with femmes, real women. Sexual desire was all about the existence of differences between man and woman, masculine and feminine, young and old and rich and poor that would attract each other. At that time sex between equals was almost inconceivable. These days the tables have been turned and unequal relations have become taboo.

It is exactly these old-fashioned forms of gay relationships that are still considered standard everywhere in the world; butches with femmes, ladies with gents (see the article regarding the Graeme Reid's thesis in this publication). The faggots of the Arabic and the Turkish world (zemels and ibnes) do it with 'normal' men - who never view themselves as gay but do engage in gay sex. This kind of gay and lesbian love is generally practiced in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. Only in the West is the homosexual model of two men, no longer faggots, who have an equal relationship, the norm. This model is gaining ground in other countries, but is still far from common. Many men have same-sex contacts in addition to their heterosexual relations. This can be with transgender persons in prostitution or with other men in parks and other places. This is called MSM (Men who have Sex with Men), a term that implies they do not adopt a homosexual identity.

Although many homosexual men and (fewer) homosexual women embrace this western model, it is also criticised. In his book, *Desiring Arabs* (2007), Joseph Massad accuses the 'gay-international', such as the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) and the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), of forcing their model of homosexuality and homosexual experience on the rest of the world, his most important issue being that all men and women that are involved in gay sex will have to ask themselves whether they are homosexual or heterosexual. Most will make a heterosexual choice and, as a result, will abandon homosexual sex, and homosexual liberation will not move forward because gays will be viewed just as negatively as faggots were previously. LGBT persons remain second-class citizens. There is no reason to assume that it is any different in the Arabic world than it is in the West, where nowadays, fewer people actively participate in gay life, but those who do participate more intensively. Exclusive heterosexuality has become the norm, while 'situational' homosexuality is losing favour, particularly amongst youths that are developing their sexual preferences.

Massad's criticism is important, but there are two questions that are not sufficiently addressed. First, the western gay model is propagated via media, NGOs, church and science and by anti-gays such as Robert Mugabe. The gay-international has limited influence. The emergence of the gay model might not be an unavoidable process, but for now it does set the tone worldwide, in spite of the homosexual movement. Secondly, there is the question of how appealing it is to be a faggot or a sissy in the current political constellation. Women in South Africa are protected by the constitution, but in most countries, faggots, transgender persons and bull dykes are scum who face insults and violence on a daily basis and turn to these themselves at times out of defence. In my opinion Massad glorifies gay life of the past too much. His criticism does raise the question of what conditions are required for universal sexual freedom to flourish. In the West, the space for sexual diversity remains limited, but it is doubtful whether it is much larger in the Middle East. There is a great deal to be negotiated within the current culture of doing it and keeping it a secret. Heterosexuality might not yet be the norm, but the reproductive marriage is. It is a matter of out of the pan and into the fire, and in both cases it leaves little room for undisturbed gay life.

Few people who display homosexual behaviour identify themselves as homosexual. There are local variations everywhere, such as transgender persons, people who do not view them-

selves as typical male or female. On the male side, there are the *Warias* in Indonesia, *Kathoeyes* in Thailand, *Hijras* and *Kotis* in India, *Travestis* in Brazil and dozens of names in American-Indian cultures. In the West we are familiar with drag queens, transvestites and transsexuals. On the female side there are the butches, lady boys, lesbian men and tomboys. The sexual partners of these transgender persons are completely invisible and have no names like the 'hetero' men that have sex with faggots and sissies or the femmes that go out with butches.

Another category are sexual acts engaged in by youths, with each other and with adults, that probably occur just as often as those of adults of the same sex, particularly when observing an age limit of eighteen years old. Such contacts are still common in India and Latin America, and were common in ancient Greece, Japan, China, amongst Melanesians and Moluccans, and in various African tribes. Until recently in Europe, little distinction was drawn between homosexual and paedophile contacts. Celebrities such as Oscar Wilde and André Gide operated more on the paedophile side of today's age limit than the homosexual side. People from this large group will seldom identify themselves as gay or lesbian; the youths because of their age and the adults because of the demonization of 'paedophile' contacts. The gay-international distances itself vigorously from this group of gay relations. In the early nineties, pressured by the US, the ILGA banned all organisations that pleaded for sexual rights of youths and paedophiles. Instead of fighting for homosexual rights, including those of the youngest participants in gay life and combatting abuse, the ILGA went along with the denial of such rights for youths that often can and want to make their own erotic choices.

There is tremendous variety in the forms in which people have homosexual contacts and define their gender positions. The western gay model might be moving forward in the rest of the world, but for now there are many other ways to experience same-sex sex as well.

Sexual Rights

The fourth point involves rights for which the homosexual movement pleads. In the US, same-sex marriage and admission to the army are high on the agenda. In Europe, visibility and sex education have become central themes, as has discrimination in the streets, schools, sports, at the work place and with housing. In many countries resistance against legalised discrimination is the most important point. In some, gay sex is still punishable by death. These are islamic countries such as Iran, Yemen, Sudan and Saudi Arabia. In former English colonies including India, Malaysia and Zimbabwe, prison sentences apply. The legal practice differs by country. In some states the law is just a dead letter, but Saudi Arabia and Iran still execute men that have been accused of 'liwat' (what is called sodomy in the West) on a regular basis.

Apart from equal rights, for which the homosexual movement generally fights, there are two more general points that are important to mention with respect to developing countries. First, gays and lesbians generally do not have any private space for sexual expression; no bedrooms, homes, or even bars where they can meet each other unhindered. As a result, gay men in particular use public areas such as parks, urinals, deserted alleys, porches and train

wagons for their sexual contacts. Even in the West the gay movement hesitates to fight for the right to public sex. In developing countries it is of bitter necessity because there are no other places. To me it seems an important theme for the international movement, not just for gays but also for sex workers and youths. Transgender persons that used to perform 'women's' work are more often banned from these jobs since women are now allowed to do these public jobs (cleaning, hair and body care, hospitality, entertainment, ritual tasks). As a last resort, they make money from street prostitution.

The second point concerns the sexual rights of youths. In spite of a worldwide movement to keep youths in a state of tutelage with regard to sexuality, youths remain sexually active everywhere, and there is no way to stop it. In the old days this did not always create a problem, or little attention was paid to it. Elsewhere it was strictly forbidden, particularly for girls whose virginity had to be 'protected'. In some cultures, such as India, child marriages were common practice. The prophet Mohammed married Aisja, a six-year-old girl, and when she was nine they started to cohabit. Homosexual practices were sometimes part of the initiation of boys in the man's world. Papuans thought that a boy could not become a man without taking sperm either orally or anally. With the Sudanese Azande and the Ottomans, adolescents performed all 'women's tasks', including those of a sexual nature, for men during war expeditions. It was no different with the mineworkers in South Africa. In his book *Travesti*, Don Kulick describes how eight-year-old boys hit on men and enjoyed it, ten years younger than the UN allows.

The efforts of the UN, states and NGOs in the area of child protection 'in actuality both reinforces heterosexual monogamy and debunks cultural diversity as inherently confusing and thus harmful for children'. (Ho, 2008, pg. 2) Children are protected by parents or schools and are raised to be reproductive heterosexual and monogamous adults. In such a system there is no place for gays or lesbians or for youths that feel like having (gay) sex. Instead of describing children's rights as protection against sex, it would be better to emphasise their right to sex education and self-determination. The pretence that children are autonomous sexual creatures only from the age of eighteen does not do justice to reality nor to their rights as sexual beings. For non-heterosexual children it means that they are exposed to the force of hetero norms that are not theirs and that can cause them lifelong harm. The same is true for children who do not fit into the typical male-female-image, such as the transgenders and intersexuals, sluts, girls who do not behave in a feminine way and boys who do not behave in a masculine manner.

The battle for the right to public sexual space and for lower age-restrictions on sexual activity among youths is about essential controversial themes. The most serious forms of discrimination with regard to sexuality and gender take place during the period of puberty. When youths do not behave in accordance with hetero-norms, they go through rough times. It is the period of final disciplining that is often accompanied by invectives to ridicule 'deviant' behaviour, and it is often youths who do this to each other. The 'misfits' are scolded by the other students, parents, teachers and other authorities with insults like faggot, sissy, slut or son of a whore, and are forced to keep straight, which they often do not want or cannot. Sometimes it involves violence (honour crimes in extreme cases), often it happens with the

necessary force and pressure where an appeal is made to religious and cultural 'traditions', or sometimes 'nature', that grab bag of occasional arguments that are never used against marriage, but always against sexual diversity, which is much more natural than marriage.

Conclusion

For now, the dominance of the western gay and lesbian model only applies in the western world and is controversial even there. There are plenty of men and women still completely in the closet who maintain distance from gay and lesbian worlds and identities. Moreover, there are 'queers' who believe that most people are capable of making a homosexual choice but do not because of hetero norms. Also, the local versions of what it means to be homosexual, lesbian or gay will always remain, failing to conform to the 'global gay' model. There are boundary conflicts between gays and lesbians that are often overlooked, and transgender persons that are almost always overlooked. People who only occasionally move in gay circles certainly cannot count on any recognition.

An important problem of the gay model is that it has led to stagnation and arrogance, and a sense of moral superiority of the West as opposed to the rest of the world. Many gays and lesbians in the West strongly believe in their sexual identity, are convinced that it is better here than it is there, and do not resist the hetero norms because they have become anchored within themselves. The rage that got the gays and lesbians going during the sexual revolution has died down. The western movement has achieved many successes, more in the EU than in the US, but they are relatively weak because the hetero norm has not been dampened; on the contrary, it has been reinforced. The western gay and lesbian movement looks worn down and seems to stagnate in the rigid machinery of institutions. In many countries the homosexual movement has become detached from the problems that gays and lesbians are faced with in daily life. The Dutch COC, for example, is dependent on government funding and hardly represents the interests of local LGBT people any more.

In developing countries these problems take a different shape. On the one hand there is great pressure from various organisations and foreign governments via aid programmes to implement western norms in the areas of gender, sexuality and relationships. In many places a strong belief in a strict gender and sexual dichotomy is drummed into peoples' heads if it did not already exist locally. The duty to 'protect' 'innocent' youths against every form of non-heterosexual contact or sex before marriage constitutes a serious threat to their sexual civil rights. Many countries know marriage coercion that, as a result of western influence, is changed into a hetero-norm that leaves no room for sexual diversity or public forms of sex. Sexual morals become more limited and restricted in a world that prides itself on freedom and diversity. Unfortunately, the anti-sexual movement is much stronger than the pro-sexual movement and it has more support from governments, religious organisations and NGO's.

There is no global movement that defends and promotes sexual civil rights against all puritan institutions, but one can distinguish a little bit of hope here and there. The internet offers extensive opportunities for meeting, activism and acquiring knowledge in the area of homo-

sexuality. In many places outside the West, the movement is more vital and more involved in the needs and desires of gays, lesbians, MSM and transgender persons. There, institutionalisation has just started and no political goals have yet been determined, so the future is more open than in the West. The energy, curiosity and drive in those countries might lead to different, more interesting results than in the West. We have already seen the example of South Africa. Ten years after apartheid, gays and lesbians serve in the army, may marry, and their rights have been secured in the constitution, while in the US these objectives, after fifty years of gay activism, still remain dreams of the future.

At the same time, gay and lesbian practices are not as consolidated as in the western world with its fixed identities. In Asian countries interesting ways have been created to integrate gays and lesbians into the family. There are lively street, sports and disco cultures for men and women with homosexual preferences that are not marked by the wariness and arrogance of the people of the West. The 'gay-international' still has a long way to go, but its chances might be better in non-western than in western countries, and in the 'new' countries (with regard to the movements) they might be more open to innovative themes such as diversity in the area of sex and gender, public gay expressions and sexual civil rights of youths. It is possible that the new 'sex/gay capitals' are no longer in the West, but in the South or in the East, in Cape Town, Bangkok, Mumbai, Manila, Shanghai or Surabaya. Queer people there are more innovative and curious.

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