



Queer in Europe

Edited by

Lisa Downing and Robert Gillett

QUEER INTERVENTIONS

QUEER IN EUROPE

Queer Interventions

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Queer in Europe

Contemporary Case Studies

Edited by
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and
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Robert Gillett is Senior Lecturer in German at Queen Mary University of London. He has published very widely on German, Austrian and comparative literature, cultural studies and film. He has made a special study of the work of the German proto-queer author Hubert Fichte, on whom he has published a bibliography, a collection of essays and some 20 articles. A monograph on Fichte is due in 2012. In addition to an article on Fichte and queer, he has written on queer issues for *The Pink Paper*, *Moderna Språk* and *Kulturpoetik*.

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Santiago Fouz-Hernández is Senior Lecturer in Spanish Cinema at the University of Durham, UK. He is co-author of *Live Flesh: The Male Body in Contemporary Spanish Cinema* (I.B. Tauris, 2007), editor of *Mysterious Skin: Male Bodies In Contemporary Cinema* (I.B. Tauris, 2009), co-editor of *Madonna's Drowned Worlds: New Approaches to Her Cultural Transformations* (Ashgate, 2004) and reviews editor of the journal *Studies in Hispanic Cinemas* (Intellect). He is currently completing a book manuscript on the representation of the male body in contemporary film and popular culture, entitled *Cuerpos de cine*.

Nick Givens is a Senior Lecturer in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Exeter, UK. He researches, often in collaboration with co-author David Nixon, in equalities and diversity within two contexts in education in England. The first is the professional socialization, induction, and career experiences of Primary and Secondary teachers whose perceived differences place them at risk of being 'othered' and positioned to their disadvantage. This research has focused in particular on the experiences of black and minority ethnic teachers in 'mainly white' schools, and on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender teachers. The second, through the *No Outsiders* project, investigates the development of approaches to pre-empting homophobia in and through

Primary Education, following the introduction of new duties placed upon state schools in England. This has brought him to an interest in what happens when legally established equalities (specifically regarding religion and belief, and sexual orientation, respectively) are positioned in conflict, raising a tension for researchers between post-structural and human rights–based understandings of social inclusion. Nick comes to this work from a background in Secondary School teaching, and also leads a pre-service training course for Secondary Teachers of Technology.

Gert Hekma is an internationally renowned Dutch scholar of the sociology and history of (homo)sexuality. He teaches gay and lesbian studies and sexuality and gender studies within the BA and MA programmes in ‘Gender, Sexuality and Society’ in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. He has written numerous articles on these subjects and has co-edited *The Pursuit of Sodomy* with Kent Gerard (1989); *Gay Men and the Sexual History of the Political Left* with Harry Oosterhuis and James D. Steakley (1995); and *Sexual Cultures in Europe* with Franz Eder and Lesley Hall (2 volumes, 1999). He is also editor of *A Cultural History of Sexuality in the Western World Volume VI: 1920–present* (2010). He is the author of *Homoseksualiteit in Nederland van 1730 tot de moderne tijd* (2004) and *ABC van perversies* (2009) and a contributor to *Gewoon doen* (2006) and *Steeds gewoner, nooit gewoon* (2010), two reports on the acceptance of homosexuality in the Netherlands. He is now working on a new book about the sexual revolution in the Netherlands (1950–1980).

Ute Kalender is currently a Research Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies on Science, Technology and Society (IAS-STs), Graz, Austria, where she is working on a project examining the role played by the categories of gender, disability and heteronormativity in the ‘renaissance’ of epigenetics. She has previously held the post of Lecturer at the Institut für Kulturwissenschaften, and in the Gender Studies Department, at Humboldt-University in Berlin, Germany; and in 2009 she was a Research Fellow at BIOS Centre, London School of Economics. Her primary research interests include gender and science studies; queer disability theory; the intersectionality of gender, heteronormativity and disability; and cultural perspectives on epigenetics.

Nayia Kamenou is a PhD candidate in the Department of European Studies at King’s College London. She is currently completing her thesis, which is entitled: *‘Cyprus is the Country of Heroes, Not of Homosexuals’: Sexuality, Gender and Nationhood in Cyprus*. Her research and teaching interests include the construction and demonstration of national identity, gender and sexuality, LGBTQ groups

and mobilization especially in southern Europe and in the Middle East, and the effects of European Union mechanisms, institutions and discourse on newly-admitted states' socio-political culture.

Luca Malici is a teaching assistant in the Department of Italian Studies at the University of Birmingham, UK, where he is also completing a PhD under the supervision of Dr Charlotte Ross. His doctoral thesis investigates how sexual minorities have been portrayed on Italian mainstream television since 1990, and explores the ways in which these representations have been affected by socio-political changes, economic trends, and changing perceptions of sexual nonconformity in Italy. The doctoral project builds on Luca's MA dissertation, written for the joint programme in 'Italian Studies: Culture and Communication' at the Universities of Birmingham and Warwick, which looked at the representation and reception of Italian non-heteronormative identities on the Internet. He is currently Development Officer for the Association of the Study of Modern Italy (ASMI).

Anne Mulhall is a Lecturer in the School of English, Drama and Film at University College Dublin, Ireland, where she teaches and researches in feminist, queer and psychoanalytic theory; Irish literary and cultural studies; and migration studies. She has published and has forthcoming essays on queer and feminist theory; contemporary Irish writing; migration and cultural change; and Irish visual culture. She has co-edited, with Moynagh Sullivan and Wanda Balzano, *Irish Postmodernisms and Popular Culture* (2007) and a special feature on the work of Bracha L. Ettinger for the journal *Studies in the Maternal* (2009) with Noreen Giffney and Michael O'Rourke.

David Nixon was awarded a PhD in Theology from the University of Exeter, UK, in 2002 and is currently working as an Anglican parish priest in Plymouth. He worked at Exeter as a University Teaching Fellow, focusing on issues of gender, power and sexuality; and was Associate Research Fellow covering South West England on the *No Outsiders* project (with co-author Nick Givens). He has both an academic interest in and practical engagement with issues of marginalization, stemming from his work with homeless people (the subject of his doctorate) and is presently exploring the stories of sexual minorities in education and the church. He is continuing to research and write in both these fields.

Łukasz Szulc is currently a PhD student at the University of Antwerp researching the self-representation of Polish, Scottish and Turkish sexual and gender minorities in cyberspace. His interest in queer studies originates with his Master's project on sexual minorities in Poland, defended at the

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Series Editor's Preface

'Europe': Faltering Project or Infinite Task? (Some Other Headings for Queer Theory)

Lisa Downing and Robert Gillett's important collection *Queer in Europe* stages an open encounter between two concepts, 'queer' and 'Europe', which bears upon both what Jürgen Habermas has called the 'future destiny of Europe'¹ and on the future objectives of queer theory and queer studies, the potential directions that they might take in that reconfigured future. Two thinkers who were otherwise opposed on most things, Habermas and Jacques Derrida co-signed a text which appeared in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in May 2003² in which they jointly issued an 'impassioned call to resist globalization (*mondialisation*) and US unilateralism in the name of Europe' 'to forge a new European identity as a counterpoise to US global power'.³ Downing and Gillett and the various contributors to this book make their own passionate plea for implementing strategies of resistance to the US unilateralism in the name of queer thinking and writing as they ask us to take account of the 'ways in which strategies that we might call 'queer', but that are non-identical with the Anglo-American flavour, are currently being implemented, discussed, taught or otherwise disseminated in a range of European countries' and invite us to forge a new 'European' 'queer' post-identity as a 'counterpoise to US global power'.

If thinking 'Europe' today has become, in Habermas' words, a faltering project then what this volume reminds us of is how thinking 'Europe' in the present is an 'infinite task' which we ought not to give up on⁴ because, as

1 Jürgen Habermas, *Europe: The Faltering Project* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), vii.

2 Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida, 'Nach Dem Krieg: Die Wiedergeburt Europas', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 31 May 2003.

3 Ross Benjamin and Heesok Chang, 'Jacques Derrida, The Last European', *SubStance*, 35(2) (2006): 140–71, at 140.

4 Rodolphe Gasché, *Europe, or the Infinite Task: A Study of a Philosophical Concept* (Stanford, CT: Stanford University Press, 2009). Here is the jacket description of Gasché's difficult but rewarding book:

Roland Gasché argues, ‘it still has philosophical legs’. Three other prominent philosophical voices – one from Bulgaria, one from France, one from Slovenia – have echoed this call and recognized the centrality of the very concept of ‘democracy’ to this task of rethinking Europe. For Tzvetan Todorov ‘without Europe’ there could have been ‘no Enlightenment’;⁵ Jean-Luc Nancy claims that ‘it is ... not incongruous to think that Europe, in spite of all its shortcomings, might indeed be a place for putting to the test a truly new sense of ‘democracy’;⁶ finally, Slavoj Žižek asserts that ‘utopian as it may appear, the space is still open for another Europe: a re-politicized Europe, founded on a shared emancipatory project; the Europe that gave birth to ancient Greek democracy, to the French and October revolutions’.⁷ If ‘whichever way you look at it’ Postmodern Europe is a ‘queer kettle of fish’, as the editors of this volume suggest, then ‘queering Europe’ and ‘Europeanizing Queer’, involves turning everything on its head, exploiting the ‘aporia’ in the various discourses around both ‘queer’ and ‘Europe’, in order to turn everything we think about both queer and Europe toward another heading, to open up a fertile ground, a new future for work in the field. ‘Queer’ is, as the introduction reminds us ‘the obstreperous offspring, nurtured in the Academy, of the marriage between Continental Philosophy and Anglo-American direct action’, is the ‘counter-discursive gesture *par excellence*’, its strategic force being its ability to turn ‘accepted thinking *on its head* [my emphasis]’. Because queer is, as James Agar writes here, a ‘*dissidentification*’, a ‘queer freedom *from* identity imposition’ it is ‘properly revolutionary’. And, while ‘North American thought is held up as the acme of achievement or progress’ the story which emerges in these chapters is ‘is not a linear or progressive one. Nor is it a story of parts of Europe ‘catching up’, at different speeds with North America. Rather, it is a story of discontinuities, of distinctions, of plurality’.

What exactly does ‘Europe’ mean for philosophy today? Putting aside both Eurocentrism and anti-Eurocentrism, Gasché returns to the old name ‘Europe’ to examine it as a concept or idea in the work of four philosophers from the phenomenological tradition: Husserl, Heidegger, Patocka, and Derrida. Beginning with Husserl, the idea of Europe became central to such issues as rationality, universality, openness to the other, and responsibility. *Europe, or the Infinite Task* tracks the changes these issues have undergone in phenomenology in order to investigate ‘Europe’s’ continuing potential for critical and enlightened resistance in a world that is progressively becoming dominated by the mono-perspectivism of global market economics. Rather than giving up on the idea of Europe as an anachronism, Gasché aims to show that it still has philosophical legs.

5 Tzvetan Todorov, *In Defence of the Enlightenment* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009).

6 Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Truth of Democracy* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2010), 40–41.

7 Slavoj Žižek, ‘A Permanent Economic Emergency’, *New Left Review*, 64 (July/August 2010): 85–95, at 86.

As many of the contributors make clear 'queer' is a term that brings problems of translation, transmission, transport and dissemination with it as it travels across borders. Song Hwee Lim has argued that 'the travel of queer theory, like a stealth bomber'⁸ challenges and problematizes any position which would assert a one-way globalizing traffic from the US-outward, rather than trans migratory flows of knowledge and ideas. So, rather than seeing a unidirectional, transcontinental line of flight going from the US to Europe, one could argue for a constant ebb and flow, a migratory queer traffic, and an altogether different mapping of the most important and innovative work in queer studies. And, if we go back to the etymological roots of the word queer we can find some possibilities for thinking about crossings, reborderizations, and tra(ns)versal(s) and ways to think about productive lines of flight between America and Europe and points of connectivity between these locations. In *Tendencies*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick is very committed to thinking about queer as meaning something different, about thinking otherwise, and about multiple criss-crossings of definitional lines. She wants the gravitas (by which she means also the centre of gravity) of the term to 'deepen and shift'. She says: 'queer is a continuing moment, movement, motive-recurrent, eddying, *troublant*. The word 'queer' itself means *across* – it comes from the indo-European root – *twerken*, which also yields the German *quer* (transverse), Latin *torquere* (to twist), English *athwart*'.⁹ However untranslatable it may be, queer has been stealthily taking root in various European countries perhaps because of its very relation to transversality, to what Hernández calls *Teoría torcida* or 'bent theory' (but as Baer cautions: 'while terminology may travel very fast in our globalized world, conditions on the ground often prove recalcitrant, generating a fundamental problem of translation: non-equivalence'). However, rather than seeing this foreign loan word queer as a McDonaldizing American exportation we could argue that the usage of queer in these countries has exciting possibilities, and not only for the development of conceptualizations of sexuality, but for broader philosophical questions too. The importation of queer will facilitate European thinking on sexuality, but it will do so, not merely by forcing an American concept onto these intellectual playing fields, but also by allowing the linguistic structures of the various European languages to remap this conceptualization, as we can see in the essays collected here. As queer anchors itself in the transverse 'quer', in crossings, the concepts of queer theory that arise in Europe and elsewhere will emphasize more the sense of crossing boundaries,

8 Song Hwee Lim, 'Queer Theory Goes to Taiwan', in Noreen Giffney and Michael O'Rourke (eds) *The Ashgate Research Companion to Queer Theory* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 257–75, at 257.

9 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (London and Durham, NC: Duke University Press), xii.

of cultural cross-fertilizations. In ‘Go West’, an introduction to a collection of essays entitled *Queer Frontiers*, Joseph Boone reminds us of the geopolitical stakes of these multiple crossings. He points out that ‘new resonances [are] given to the metaphor of going West [which] explicitly overwrite the scenario of conquest with a global vision of frontiers and of imaginative possibility. In this vision, the West becomes a liminal space rather than a final goal or resting place, a borderland traversed on the way to a new dispensation that lies beyond the horizons of the seen or known. Queer theory and queer studies, too, may be conceived as a borderland and a frontier, a space of transition and a still largely unexplored geography’.¹⁰

Europe, too, has been conceived by Derrida, across a wide range of texts, as a ‘borderland traversed on the way to a new dispensation that lies beyond the horizons of the seen and known’. Simon Morgan Wortham’s entry for Derrida’s 1992 book *The Other Heading*¹¹ in *The Derrida Dictionary* describes how ‘Europe seems both old and young, at once a long-since exhausted theme and a still youthful promise of what is yet to come. Europe has always been a heading (*cap*), a cape or peninsula but also the (capital) launching point for adventure, discovery, colonization, invention, indeed the very promontory for the ‘historical’ in its trajectory as a concept, the headland for an exemplary idea or image of human civilization as advancement itself’.¹² Derrida insists that Europe must, to adopt his maritime metaphor, set sail for a radically other heading, albeit one which eschews the phallogentrism of the *cap* as it holds on to its Enlightenment inheritance. Ukrika Dahl’s concluding chapter to this volume takes up similar ‘geopolitical’ and topological issues because, as she notes, queer theory in Europe is often cast as ‘an immigrant vested with the power of Anglo-American imperialism’ which is ‘in need of “nationalization” through translation’. This ‘territorialization of ideas and strategies’ has, she recalls, often depended upon an ‘Americanization of “European” philosophical traditions’. To counter this Dahl forcibly asserts that ‘a key part of telling queer stories thus centres on how ‘we are different from ‘them’ and, as I have shown, the imagined ‘we’ in this case are those implicitly linguistically and culturally located in the region and ‘they’ are the Anglo-Americans who simultaneously colonize ‘our’ thinking and ignore what ‘we’ are doing (but for whom ‘we’ should write)’. If telling queer stories requires Europeanizing queer, necessitates remembering,

10 Joseph A. Boone, ‘Go West: An Introduction’ in Boone et al. (eds) *Queer Frontiers: Millennial Geographies, Genders, and Generations* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 3–20, at 9.

11 Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today’s Europe* (Bloomington, ID: Indiana University Press, 1992).

12 Simon Morgan Wortham, *The Derrida Dictionary* (London: Continuum, 2010), 217.

as Hernández does ‘autochthonous’ queer theories rather than ‘imported theories’, it does not, however, we must insist, mean installing a Eurocentrism in place of US homogenization. As Michael Naas, in ‘A Last Call for “Europe”’, a reading of Derrida’s short text ‘A Europe of Hope’¹³ tells us, ‘the ‘Europe’ to which Derrida is referring is not simply for Europeans but for anyone in the world, whether in or out of Europe, who hears this call’ (84) and this ‘goes well beyond the commonly defined geographical and political boundaries of what is today called Europe’ (84). Naas goes on to say that:

It is this ‘Europe’ that is perhaps also related to a certain ‘United States’ that is, to *our hope*, to a ‘United States’ that will resist the Americanism-the globalization- to which the United States might think it is beholden or destined but that is in the end merely the slogan for a program that will be global in only the worst ways, that will actually concentrate wealth and power in unprecedented ways, that will, in the end, be a betrayal of that other ‘United States’, of what is best about our American past in relation to the promise of this Europe. We can only hope – though, clearly, for Derrida, hope is something more than just wishful thinking. It is the very draw or *aspiration* of the future (94).

Europe, for Derrida, here and elsewhere, is a paleonym, an old word with a new meaning grafted on to it. In this usage, Europe designates an ‘inheritance open to alteration. As in his notion of democracy to come Derrida did not envision the advent of a new political order, but sketched out a space of actively attending to something as yet undetermined and not guaranteed to arrive’.¹⁴ ‘Europe’, in quotation marks, is an old name which paleonymically remains a good name for the promise of resisting *mondialisation*. Europe is a name which Derrida thinks is still a good one to graft on to a certain hope even if, as with democracy, it is a name which might need to be revised in the future. James Agar, in his chapter on France, which doesn’t, as I do here, see Derrida as the progenitor of a certain version of Anglo Queer Theory, talks about ‘relexicalization’ and how a ‘newly relexicalized, celebratory “queer”’ also harbors within it the very name of a kind of promise or aspiration, a ‘queer dissidence, an expressive force at odds with prevailing orthodoxies’. If as Morgan Wortham says, ‘Europe must open itself to a future unprogrammed by its past, a future that could never be homogenized as fully present in its absolute identity’ (217) then queer too must paleonymically open itself to a ‘future unprogrammed by its past’, must unground itself. As Nixon and Givens write here, ‘there is in queer no comfortable home in which to find refuge’ and queer must cast itself adrift and

13 Michael Naas, *Derrida from Now On* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2008).

14 Benjamin and Chang, 141–2.

distance itself from stubborn hegemonies if it is to make good on its promise to invent a new future, to have a 'better chance of long-term social change towards equity in a world of complexity and fluidity'.

Bart Eeckhout, in his chapter on Belgium, discusses the group Queerilla who are 'influenced by alter-globalization activism and anarchism' and it is no wonder that Derrida specifically sees the alter-globalization movements as exemplary in harboring the secret name of Europe as promise. In one of his last ever texts he writes: 'To dream, as [Ignacio] Ramonet says, that 'another world is possible', but to give ourselves the strength to do all that would make it actually possible. Billions of men and women in the world share this dream. Through slow and painful labor they will give birth to it some day'.¹⁵ As the paleonyms 'Queer' and 'Europe' encounter and productively unsettle and destabilize each other, the essays collected in *Queer in Europe*, through their slow and painful labours, potentialize that dream of another queer world. New names, new worlds and new political imaginaries become legible as the borders of queer thinking shift and 'we' embark on another heading – the other of queer theory's heading(s) – in the interests of a 'Europe' and a 'Queer Theory' yet to exist, one which preseves difference in its own identity. This, again, is more than mere wishful thinking; it is the very 'draw or *aspiration*' of the queer future to come.

Michael O'Rourke

15 Jacques Derrida, 'Une Europe de L'Espoir', *Le Monde Diplomatique* (November 2004).

Preface

As is often the case with collections bringing together the work of disparate authors, the editors feel the need in this preface to put in place a number of definitions, descriptions, and disclaimers about the ways in which the material that follows has been rationalized and organized. Firstly, we have ordered the chapters alphabetically, according to the name of the country or region they treat. This organization of the material reflects an underlying principle of the book; namely a refusal of hierarchy. This entails eschewing a narrative of progressiveness based on an Anglophone Western perspective or on the supposition that North American queer is more developed or advanced than its European queer counterparts.

Secondly, in considering the range of regions discussed, it is necessary to state that, while representing a relatively wide geographical area within Europe, the book does not aim for comprehensive coverage. *Queer in Europe: Contemporary Case Studies* has been assembled to address a particular range of questions about contemporary intersections of LGBT politics and the intellectual/activist use of 'queer' strategies. There are other geographical regions within Europe whose cultural and political circumstances would raise questions which would be so different from the ones treated here that they would fall under the remit of a different book altogether. This is a potential direction for future research that is of great interest to the current editors.

Just as the book cannot be geographically comprehensive, nor is each contribution to be taken as the definitive statement on queer/LGBT issues in a given country. Rather, the contributions have been chosen as they each represent a salient issue (hate speech, education, parenting, AIDS, etc.) in a particular national context. They are by necessity both partial and subjective, being the reflections of the interests, experience and identity of the author. In some cases the authors are nationals of the countries they analyse, and often key queer activists in these states. In other cases authors write from the perspective of academic expertise in the culture, history or politics of a given geographical area, while being based in an institution outside of the country discussed. A balance has been struck in representing both positions, and also between the inclusion of perspectives by world-leading scholars and by relatively junior academics/activists.

There will inevitably be some omissions in material covered that may strike the reader as strange or even offensive. We are aware, for example, that there

is not very much discussion about issues affecting intersexed people. This reflects not a bias on the part of the editors, but a dearth of discussion in the national contexts explored. LGBT – and, to a lesser extent, T – issues have, in most countries discussed, shaped the political and intellectual debates that constitute the current state of ‘queer in Europe’. Our book interrogates and explores the existing discourses found, rather than seeking to expand those discourses in directions that would be desirable. (Exploring the aporia in these discourses and working towards their expansion would also be a fascinating objective for future work in the field). We are also aware of a tendency in some national contexts to emphasize issues affecting gay men disproportionately, or to assume that what happens to gay men also happens to lesbians. This does not reflect an endorsement of such discourses but rather a desire to record them as current. In the course of the book there may also be discourses that different contingencies find politically or ethically rebarbative. Our aim, again, is not to endorse these, but to represent them accurately. The views expressed by the contributors do not always accord with each other, and are not necessarily shared by the editors.

Because this is a book about the dissemination, translation and transmission of a word and a concept across national and linguistic boundaries, it uses terms taken from a variety of disparate languages and cultural contexts. Therefore, the question of language – of what ‘queer’ means in different cultures – is constitutive for the book. Translations are provided by the authors themselves and reflect their understanding of local cultural meanings. Consistency would be impossible and, in any case, variation is prioritized as an accurate reflection of contemporary practice. The reader will not find here a single definition of ‘queer’. Each contributor has a slightly different understanding of the term. This is neither an accident nor a flaw; rather it is a central point of the present work.

In some cases, however, it has been necessary to establish a loose convention for talking about key concepts. ‘Trans*’ is the term we are using to connote the plurality of transgendered and transsexual identities and experiences. Every time what is being referred to has this inclusive meaning, we use ‘trans*’. If an author wishes to refer only to ‘transsexual’ or ‘transgendered’ people or issues in a particular context, s/he will use those terms. Throughout, the editors use and encourage the use of ‘LGBT’ and, where appropriate ‘LGBTQI’ as the umbrella acronym, but having established this convention, we note that where individual authors depart from this usage, it is in the service of reflecting the specificity of a given example in local discourse.

A number of people are owed thanks for their encouragement and engagement with the project that led to the conception of this book. Lisa Downing and Robert Gillett would like to thank everyone who was involved in the three-day conference on ‘Queer in Europe’ held at the University of Exeter

PREFACE

in 2008 and the Critical Sexology Seminar on the same topic held at Queen Mary University of London in 2009, including keynote speakers, panellists, delegates, administrative staff and students. For their assistance in the preparation of the book, we owe a debt of gratitude to series editor, Michel O'Rourke, for encouraging us to submit the proposal to 'Queer Interventions' in the first place, and for helping us to get it into a state of readiness for publication; and to Darren Foster for his eagle-eyed formatting and proof-reading of each of the chapters prior to submission of the manuscript.

An earlier version of Santiago Fouz-Hernández's chapter was published as 'Identity without Limits: Queer Debates and Representation in Contemporary Spain', *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, 10(1) (2004), 63–82. It is reprinted here by permission of the copyright holders, Taylor and Francis.

Lisa Downing and Robert Gillett
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Introduction

Lisa Downing and Robert Gillett

Whichever way you look at it, 'Europe' is a queer kettle of fish. The entities that comprise it are extremely, even incompatibly, various. It encompasses mentalities and traditions that seem so different as to be mutually incomprehensible. Much of its history has been dominated by protracted internecine strife, so that common enemies or shared subjugation have been needed to create unity. Its borders, far from being obvious and insurmountable, are contentious precisely because they are largely arbitrary and need to be naturalized. From the very beginning it has been characterized by inclusions and exclusions that even the most intimately involved insider or the shrewdest outside observer would be hard put to explain. And from the very beginning it has told itself stories about sexuality and gender that are ideological, incoherent and bitterly contestable.

To a scandalously large extent, these stories have been told by men, whose perspective and whose prerogative for speaking are equally inseparable from their possession of a penis, according to a hegemonic cis-sexist logic of binary sexual difference. Accordingly the discourse transparently revolves around notions of what they might want to do with that penis, and what they think they ought to (and, crucially ought not to) have done with it. And 'woman' appears, if at all, as a nebulous other. Classical Greek thought for example excludes her almost entirely and instead installs at the heart of its discourse a form of intergenerational sex between males that embodies hegemonic notions of phallic agency. The Christian church, with its impossible cult of the Virgin mother, at once denigrates and extols heterosexuality, creates conditions for and roundly condemns non-reproductive sex. In freeing the West from what it saw as the superstitions of Christianity, the Enlightenment was unable to banish completely the prejudices that subtended it. In the age of capitalism and empire, then, the restoration, with its adherence to the mechanical logic of cause and effect, its passion for taxonomy, and its ultimate allegiance to the status quo, constructed with all seriousness and the best of intentions a system for the understanding of gender and sexuality which is held together only by its hegemonic contradictions. The lynch pin of this system is the essentializing binary of gender; and its consequences included not only allegedly incontrovertible proofs that women were stupid

and homosexuals sick, but also the perceived need for the (re)-criminalization of sex between men. Instead of overturning this system and attempting to envisage alternatives, postmodern Europe seeks legislatively to limit the most baleful of its consequences while endorsing the thinking that produces them. Very often, for example, the labelling of public toilets still enacts a form of discrimination which the law explicitly prohibits.

History suggests that there are only two ways to combat this nefarious combination of deliberate incoherence and power. One is to stay within the discourse and fight for rights. The (harder) other is to reject the premises of the discourse altogether. The often bitter dialectical relationship between the two has dominated discussion of LGBTQ history and strategy since the Second World War. In this period the United States has been the dominant world power, so it is with North American examples that the story is often told. In this account, the Stonewall riots marked a crucial shift from accommodation to self-assertion. The liberation movements that arose as a result subsequently settled for assimilation, until the AIDS epidemic exploded the myth of tolerance and reignited the old fury. This new activism also spawned new ways of thinking. With the fading of the syndrome from the public consciousness, rights are again at the top of the agenda, with critical theory seemingly irrelevant. Yet the illogic with which that agenda is sometimes pursued can still seem residually aggressive.

In this sense, *Rainbow's End*, the title of the film about the situation of gay men in contemporary Europe that was released by German filmmakers Jochen Hick and Christian Jentsch in 2006, is significantly ambiguous. According to the popular myth, what is to be found at the end of the rainbow is a pot of gold. It is therefore entirely apt that the rainbow symbol is used to identify commercial enterprises that project themselves as gay friendly. The very existence of such spaces is an unmistakable sign of a visibility and acceptance that were unthinkable in the dark days of previous centuries. Indeed, as with the red ribbon, the establishment of such a meaning can be read as indicative of the LGBT community's triumphant success in manipulating the post-modern media landscape. Equally it might sometimes seem that gay men and lesbians have in fact finally attained their elusive prize of legal recognition. And in the light of this, there are those who would conclude that the whole campaign, for which the rainbow was also a symbol, is likewise at an end.

Conversely, though, we all know that the rainbow, exemplum of the spectrum and hence of diversity and sign of a new covenant after a murderous flood, is an optical illusion. A world in which individual businesses feel the desire or the need to project themselves as gay friendly is a world in which most do not. Because certain leading nations of the West persist in pursuing indefensible wars in foreign lands, the rainbow symbol is seconded to duties perceived as more pressing. The law, whatever the intentions behind it, is necessarily normative,

and what it prohibits is very often a real and present danger. The new visibility is achieved at the cost of a paradoxical invisibility. And what happens when the campaign is abandoned is business as usual. Homophobia is entrenched in the language of schoolchildren, in the discourses attributed to influential religions, even in the constitution of a certain emergent democracy. In short, what you find at the end of the rainbow is not a pot of gold, but a backlash.

Accordingly, in the film itself, there is disturbing footage of two men who, in the so-called gay capital of Europe, are afraid to leave their apartment because of fear of homophobic violence from young North African immigrant neighbours. And one gay Dutch Muslim quietly explains that the reason he moved to Amsterdam is that in his home town he was beaten up so badly that he had to spend three nights in hospital. The tale is also told of the implicitly homophobic chicaneries meted out to a would-be immigrant to the United Kingdom. And there are graphic depictions of the aggression, condoned by the Police and hence by implication co-ordinated by the State, which was vented upon participants in the March for Equality in Krakow. The point is made repeatedly that the progress achieved in some countries should not blind us to what goes on elsewhere. Even ostensibly humanist organizations such as the United Nations are shown to be bureaucratically obstructive and diplomatically divided.

Yet we are also presented in the film with a gay couple in the liberal German capital of Berlin. Berlin has an openly gay mayor and a vibrant nightlife which attracts visitors from all over Europe, including the new plutocrats of the former Soviet Union. Far from taking advantage of these freedoms, though, our gay couple remain glued to the computer screen. What they are looking for is vicarious titillation; their computer stands for the anonymous commoditization of gay sexuality in the post-modern age. What they find, though, are websites promulgating the death penalty for homosexuals. Their comfortable consumption is in tension with the need for political action. In this respect as in many others, the Hick/Jentsch film offers a telling snapshot of the state of queer in Europe. The term itself, though, does not appear. It is to this that we now turn.

It is by now commonplace to state that 'queer' is the obstreperous offspring, nurtured in the Academy, of the marriage between Continental philosophy and Anglo-American direct action. The epistemic conditions for queer to emerge in 1980s were created by the simultaneity of two distinct happenings: the AIDS crisis giving rise to the strategies of Act Up and Queer Nation, on the one hand, and the Post-Structuralist turn in academic Rhetoric and Sociology departments, on the other. In the context of a project that seeks to articulate the exact relationship between 'Europe' and 'queer', however, this tale of origins nevertheless bears repeating – and interrogating.

For the purposes of this book, ‘queer in Europe’ does not mean a return to the texts of Nietzsche, Foucault, and Derrida that provided the conceptual underpinnings of queer’s anti-identitarian, non-linear and common-sense-defying force. Rather, it describes the ways in which strategies that we might call ‘queer’, but that are non-identical with the Anglo-American flavour, are currently being implemented, discussed, taught, or otherwise disseminated in a range of European countries. These do not constitute a straightforward ‘return to Europe’, home of queer’s Continental origins, since these very discourses – of origin and of home – are ones that queer thinking would seek to trouble. Moreover, as discussed by James N. Agar in his chapter of the book on queer in France, Foucault was not, until very recently with the work of Didier Eribon (1999), and Marie-Hélène Bourcier (2005, 2006), understood in his homeland as a ‘queer’ thinker – or even as a thinker primarily concerned with sexuality. And Derrida, who in the States is heralded as a progenitor of queer, has still to be recognized in those terms in the H^éxagone.

Our book traces how elements of queer are deployed in a range of European countries and regions. It reveals ways in which the foci and strategic aims of European queer at the close of the first decade of the twenty-first century may look different to those of its American counterpart. A good example is the treatment of intersectionality in queer, gender studies and feminisms in the US context and in the various parts of Europe treated in this book. While intersectionality is currently at the heart of contemporary US work, particularly with regard to the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality, its presence in Europe is, arguably, less programmatic and compulsory, but nevertheless very present. This is amply seen in contributions to this book on queer in England, in Germany, and in the Netherlands, among others. The extent to which Europe and North America relate differently to the discourse of race cannot be underestimated, and the specific North American history of Slavery plays a role that parallels, but is distinct from, Europe’s chequered history of Colonialism (which, of course, differs according to national context). What is certain is that, in an increasingly multicultural Europe, the diversity of religious and cultural citizenship leads to a series of challenges for queer theorists attending to the ethical – or politically correct – call to intersectionality.

Similarly, much very recent queer theoretical work in the USA has been characterized by the so-called ‘antisocial turn’.¹ This describes a strand of queer that strategically embraces, for radical purposes, homophobic clichés about non-heterosexual folk, such as their perversity and lack of capacity for ‘natural’ reproduction. This is particularly associated with Lee Edelman’s *No Future*:

1 The term originates with a panel on ‘The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory’ that took place at the MLA Annual Conference held in Washington DC, USA, December 27, 2005.

Queer Theory and the Death Drive (2004); and with the work of Judith Halberstam (2005) and, retrospectively, Michael Warner (1999). A second recent strand of North American theory is characterized by studies that apply a resignifying queer logic to the category of disability, resulting in the production of ‘crip theory’, associated primarily with Robert McRuer (2006). It would be erroneous and – un-queer – to interpret the relative European silence on these issues as a measure of the lack of sufficient ‘development’ in European queer, as this would interpret difference as progress and suggest a straightforward teleology whereby North American thought is held up as the acme of achievement or progress.

To adopt such a viewpoint would also entail repeating a commonly told story – which may be an accurate reflection of events in certain contexts; but not necessarily all. Namely, it would risk suggesting that where liberal rights are not available for a marginalized group, the identity-rejecting energies of queer will be necessarily unproductive. Where marriage and reproductive rights are still to be won, the logic might go, Edelman’s rejection of ‘reproductive futurism’ (Edelman 2004) is premature. While Brian James Baer, in his chapter on Russia, warns against the application of the ‘queer’ label to sexual phenomena that need to be understood via a closer apprehension of Russian culture, Ulrika Dahl shows how, within the academy of the Nordic region, queer did not appear after gay and lesbian studies, but at roughly the same time, drafting a different narrative of the relationship between the two in a particular context. Similarly, Ute Kalender situates the academic life of German queer in terms of its fraught place in debates about class privilege and leftist materialist thought that describes a trajectory for queer politics and scholarship that is very different from the Anglo-American narrative of queer’s intellectual development (even if German queer is currently similarly preoccupied with intersectionality). Finally, Erzsébet Barát suggests that where there is no public discussion of homophobic hate speech, but a national debate on anti-Semitism, the queer thinker must act to queer the terms of the debate, opening up the possibility of both moving sexualities equality into the public eye and, simultaneously, undermining the identity politics which might cast such a debate in a liberal rights framework. The story of queer that emerges in this book, then, is not a linear or progressive one. Nor is it a story of parts of Europe ‘catching up’, at different speeds, with North America. Rather, it is a story of discontinuities, of distinctions and of plurality.

The chapters of *Queer in Europe* constitute self-standing case studies of the state and status of LGBTIQI politics and local queer strategies in a range of countries and regions. They also, however, address a number of over-arching questions that structure the book as a whole. These questions include the following:

- *How might we conceptualize a queer subject or the subject of queer?* The term ‘subject’ has two major – interrelated – senses, deriving from debates on the intersection of politics and philosophy. In Michel Foucault’s terms, the subject is constituted as a result of the operations of networks of power and knowledge that exhort individuals to produce discursively the ‘truth’ of their identity. Queer is the counter-discursive political gesture *par excellence*, in that it allows for the illusion of ontological subjectivity to be shattered and revealed as a construction (Halperin 1995). The other meaning of ‘subject’ implies agency and, often, the capacity for bearing political rights or representation. The ‘subject’ in this sense is defined by not being the ‘object’. Queer politics in different national contexts may imagine the subject differently in response to constitutional differences. This disparity is nicely exemplified in the cases of Belgium and France. The former, as described by Bart Eeckhout in his chapter, is a highly divided state which nonetheless enshrines specific protective and progressive LGBT rights in legislation, and which generates state-funded activism; the latter is defined by, in the words of Agar, ‘the tradition of Republican universalism which sees all as equal partners in the Republic but which likewise tends not to recognize specific expressions of group difference’. The strategic force of queer operates very differently in imagining the non-normative sexual subject in these two countries, as the authors of the respective chapters make clear.
- *What is the relationship between queer and activism?* The word ‘queer’ was originally a term of contempt. Reclaiming it was a political act, was activism. But it was a kind of conceptual activism, which moreover is not possible in languages other than English. ‘Queer theory’ on the other hand is a body of highly complex thought. But because it turns accepted thinking on its head, it is properly revolutionary. It is often argued that, in the United States, queer has been institutionalized in universities and has lost touch with its activist roots. By the same token parts of Europe are felt to be not (yet) ready for queer. In the face of violent homophobia, so the argument goes, the elaboration of difficult theory is an unaffordable luxury. As Łukasz Szulc shows though, in the case of Poland, universities as institutions, precisely because they give a home to queer theory, may provide pockets of resistance to prevalent homophobic discourse. In the case of Hungary, apparently abstruse theorizing offers a way out of a bitterly contested impasse with direct legal implications. And in the case of Ireland, Anne Mulhall demonstrates that activism without theory turns out to be merely a matter of shoring up the status quo for the sake of personal gain. Thus the relationship between queer and activism, in Europe as in the United States, is, and has always been, dialectical. And to suggest otherwise is disingenuous.
- *What is the relationship between queer and nationalism?* In the United States, the notion of a ‘Queer Nation’ can be invoked, apparently without irony,

to conjure feelings of belonging. In Europe, as demonstrated by Nayia Kamenou in her chapter on Cyprus, and by Mulhall with regard to the instructively parallel case of Ireland, discourses of nationalism can seem in every particular opposed to the ideals of queer. Very often, nationalists tend to be conservative and allied to homophobic institutions such as the Church. For obvious reasons, the nation has investment in the family; and the family, as the locus par excellence of reproductive heteropatriarchy, is inimical to queer. By the same token, the notion of nation is bound up with the idea of identity, whereas queer deliberately interpellates multiple identities. Precisely through this multiple interpellation, though, queer makes it possible to re-imagine not only the family and the nation, but also the institutions that support them. Giving children a queer education and allowing them to enter into a queer marriage may just turn out to be a possible pathway towards the realization of a queer nation.

- *What is the relationship between queer and religion?* Of all the multiple forms of identity which the notion of ‘intersectionality’ addresses, ‘religion’ is mentioned a good deal less frequently than almost all the others. Given the complicity of major institutionalized religions in homophobic discourse, it is understandably more usual to treat religion as the enemy of queer. As Gert Hekma points out with regard to Islamophobic sentiment in the Netherlands, however, this is a strategy that has been adopted rather too readily by politicians with a very different agenda, and is therefore suspect. Very often, indeed, what happens is that *other* religions are demonized, frequently from an implicitly or explicitly nationalist position, while the aporia of those perceived as indigenous are conveniently forgotten. In many cases, indeed, attacks on a particular religion must be regarded as merely a coded form of racism. The question then arises as to how to avoid such racism without being seen to condone the exclusionary, othering or demonizing discourses adopted by certain clerics in the name of their religion. A properly queer answer, proposed by David Nixon and Nick Givens in their chapter on ‘Queer in England’, is provided by intersectional thinking. Taking seriously the possibility that one and the same person might be both queer and a practising Christian, Muslim, or Jew might be a way of safeguarding against easy condemnations and attaining a more subtle understanding of the religions concerned, including, where applicable, dogmatic sticking-points on the subject of sexuality.
- *What is the relationship between queer and capitalism?* If as Jameson (1991) asserts, postmodernism is the logic of late capitalism, and if, as seems plausible, queer is the postmodern manifestation of the LGBT, then it follows that queer is intimately bound up with late capitalism. Terms such as the ‘dorothy dollar’ or the ‘pink pound’, expanded in line with globalization to include the pink euro, amply testify to the extent to which capitalism has embraced queer.

The use of global player Gap in queer consciousness raising campaigns suggests that in the United States at least the feeling might be mutual. In Europe, though, there has been an equal and opposite tendency to problematize the connection. As Kalender points out, in Germany strong political opposition to the practices of neo-liberalism is accompanied by a sophisticated theorization of its normative effects. In Spain too, as Santiago Fouz-Hernández notes, the commoditization of alternative sexualities has met with considerable resistance. And Luca Malici's suggestion, made in the context of Italian television, that a stress on multiple intersectionality would lead to a properly queer understanding of the notion of 'audience', because it is also clearly applicable to 'markets', suggests one possible way in which such resistance might be conceptualized.

- *What is the relationship between queer and feminism?* The relationship between feminism and LGBTQI rights movements is often narrated as a story of origins and borrowings, with gay rights movements taking up activist strategies developed by their women's rights forebears. Anglo-American queer theory also owes a debt to feminism, in particular via Judith Butler's reading of deconstructive and Foucauldian philosophy through and with feminist theory. European forms of queer similarly have their own varied and sometimes vexed relationship with feminism. Dahl's chapter on the Nordic countries (Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway and Iceland) explores the ways in which a predominant strand of 'queer feminism' is understandable in the specific context of welfare state politics and a state feminism – in Sweden in particular and the Nordic countries more generally. Dahl shows how for some male academics, "Swedish queer feminism" is seen as incompatible with the "sex radical" origins of queer' which embrace promiscuity and sexual commerce. She contests that such a male-centric perspective risks undermining the radical potential of a new 'femme-inist' queer politics. The chapter on the Netherlands approaches a similar issue from a different perspective. Hekma argues that the notoriously liberal and libertarian country is currently undergoing a shift towards a politics of restriction and assimilation in sexual matters. Hekma provocatively argues for a strategic suspicion of the rhetoric of 'equality' that now saturates Dutch politics, as it comes at the price of the freedom of 'the kinky and promiscuous queers'. This thematizes the way in which traditional feminist values and queer ones can find themselves sometimes at odds within progressive politics.
- *Is queer a sufficiently robust strategy for dealing with expressions of hatred?* The editors and authors of this book are keen to explore the extent to which queer, dismissed by some as an elitist academic discourse, may in fact offer fresh ways of combating instances of *phobia, including hate speech and violence. In the case of England, Nixon and Givens chart

the growth of homophobic linguistic slurs and bullying among school children. They ask the question ‘what would a queer primary pedagogy look like?’. Rather than living up to the right-wing accusations that they are sexualizing education, the authors show how queer in the classroom offers a strategy for understanding the extent to which education is *already* (hetero)sexualized and for denaturalizing this heteronormativity. Secondly, it enables a way of imagining the multiplicity of equalities agendas in a multi-cultural European society, that are not well managed by positivistic human rights legislation, as intersecting rather than competing. Queer thinking affords a way of troubling liberal rights discourse in a Hungarian context too, as mentioned briefly above. The case of recent discussions in the Hungarian press about anti-Semitic hate speech is taken by Barát as a way of imagining an agentic response to homophobia that derives ‘from on-going negotiations of interests or norms that are transmutable’ rather than ‘the self-evident expression of a fixed sense of belonging in a foundational social collective’. Finally, Baer offers a different perspective by showing how what might resemble the fluidity of ‘queer’ in a Russian context may in fact be an expression of the impossibility of identifying actively as gay or lesbian without facing the threat of extreme personal violence. Baer raises questions about the ethics of ‘imagining non-Western societies as utopias – in particular queer utopias’.

As this book shows, the converse – be it demonizing non-Western societies or imagining Western ones as utopian – is no less dangerous. Indeed, any thinking which distributes judgemental predicates according to exclusionary categories is of doubtful validity and morally questionable. It is hoped that this book, by queering ‘Europe’ and Europeanizing queer, will help at the very least to provide alternative perspectives.

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Chapter 1

Queer in Belgium: Ignorance, Goodwill, Compromise

Bart Eeckhout

Belgium in a Nutshell

Any attempt at elucidating the situation of queer activism and queer academic work in Belgium needs to be prefaced by a brief historical introduction to the country.¹ Well-known for being at the political-geographic heart of Europe but otherwise drawing blanks from most outsiders, the Kingdom of Belgium (population ten million) is a nineteenth-century construction: a relatively artificial nation-state that declared itself independent in 1830 at the outcome of a minor revolution and with the support of the Great Powers at the time, who saw the small country in strategic terms as a practical, harmless buffer between the principal power blocks in Western Europe. A minor prince of German descent who had no historic ties to the newly confected country was imported and put on the throne to serve as its king.

Being such an artificial construction, Belgium was internally divided from the start into hierarchically organized social groups, called ‘pillars’, which effectively substituted for the nation-state. These ideological pillars had their own electoral constituencies and doubled more or less as ‘hermetically separated and all-embracing nations-within-the-nation’ (Judt 2005: 16). By the 1880s three such pillars were firmly established: the Catholics (especially strong in the countryside and in Flanders), the Liberals (consisting largely of the urban and mercantile bourgeoisie, most powerful in Brussels) and the Socialists (who defended the industrial working class and were thus most popular in Wallonia, then at the forefront of the Industrial Revolution in Continental Europe).

1 The background information in my opening pages draws heavily on two essays I co-authored with fellow LGBT activists, one with Paul Borghs for a recent issue of the *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family* (see References), the other with David Paternotte entitled ‘A Paradise for LGBT Rights? The Paradox of Belgium’, currently under review by the *Journal of Homosexuality*. I am happy to be able to acknowledge both Paul’s and David’s expertise and generosity of spirit here.

The weakening of these three ideological pillars is a fairly recent phenomenon and their lingering effects are by no means negligible even today. Understanding this aspect of Belgian history is of some importance, for instance, in the context of recent social policies toward LGBTs. Since both the Liberal and Socialist pillars have been able over time to develop a fully autonomous counter-system to the dominant Catholic pillar – a counter-system which has been mostly anticlerical and secular-humanist in inspiration and frequently tightened through the bonds of freemasonry – this has resulted in among other things the kind of hospital policies (for example at the Free University of Brussels) that have been beneficial especially to lesbian women with a desire for children.

If, however, the social phenomenon of ideological pillars were the only cultural specificity troubling an outsider's understanding of Belgian society, this country would not be so commonly perceived as incomprehensible. But the whole situation is deeply complicated by language issues. For more than a century and a half language has built a barrier 'below, above, within, and across' the pillars and political divisions of Belgian society (Judt 2005: 17). More recently it may even be argued to have instituted a pillar of its own: there is now often more animosity in the country based on language oppositions than on the traditional oppositions between Catholics, Liberals and Socialists. To sum up in one sentence what is impossible to synthesize so succinctly: the northern part of the country, with more than half of the population, speaks Flemish Dutch, while the southern part speaks French, a small area on the German border German, and the country's capital Brussels is officially bilingual French-Dutch, though its Old Belgian residents are preponderantly French-speaking, its sizable community of Eurocrats use mainly English, and the high number of recent non-European immigrants is essentially multilingual (although again mostly using French in public spaces).

I am obliged to cut corners also when explaining the history of linguistic strife in the country. During the first century of its existence Belgium was ruled almost entirely by a Francophone elite, but in the course of the twentieth century the mostly rural and at the time more impoverished Flemings increasingly clamoured for their rights. In 1962–1963 this resulted in a remarkable political deal whereby the linguistic borders in the country were officially laid down by law and could not be altered without the mutual consent of the two major linguistic communities. The result is that in Belgium territory is a marker of language and if you cross any of the linguistic dividing lines you are forced to change the language you use for official purposes. The principal reason why Belgium has not split into two separate monolingual countries, in fact, despite the growing rhetoric about this in Flanders, is that Brussels, with its largely French-speaking population, cuts across the neat geographic polarity of North versus South: territorially it is within Flanders,

but linguistically it is not. The main institutional outcome of decades of linguistic animosity has been an ongoing ‘federalization process’ which started with the first State Reform in 1970. There have been five laboriously brokered State Reforms since then and a sixth is uncertainly pending in the future. All of the reforms have tended to dismantle the federal level to the benefit of subsidiary government levels organized around the concepts of regions and linguistic communities.

A brief crash course of this sort is unfortunately necessary to begin to understand the fragmented quality of Belgian politics and sociocultural life. Since the introduction of various forms of regional and communitarian autonomy for example, all the political parties in the country have split along linguistic and community lines and elections are divided territorially. Except when they interact in Brussels, Flemish and French-speaking Belgians tend to live in two separate worlds, nor do they always speak each other’s language (even literally). At the political-institutional level one result is that Belgium counts some six parliaments and six governments, though even political scientists occasionally disagree on the precise count.

A Spate of LGBT-friendly Legislation and Social Policies

Somewhat paradoxically in light of its predominantly Catholic history and conservative reputation, Belgium has in recent years become a frontrunner in the extension of legal rights to, and the development of social policies for, its LGBT citizens. To illustrate this quickly, I will restrict myself to the following facts:

- Belgium is the second country ever (after the Netherlands but before either Canada or Spain) to have opened up civil marriage to same-sex couples;
- Belgium has passed an encompassing antidiscrimination law that prohibits the discrimination of people on the basis of their sexual orientation;
- Belgium has opened up both national and international adoption to married and unmarried same-sex couples as well as to single LGBTs;
- Belgium provides easy and affordable medical access to reproductive technologies for lesbian singles or couples who want to have children through artificial insemination by anonymous donors;
- Belgium gives transsexuals the right to change their sex and name and does not force them to divorce when they undergo surgery;
- Belgium has various Ministries of Equal Opportunities (at different levels of its political system) which actively sponsor the country’s LGBT grassroots organizations, as well as a Centre for Equal Opportunities and the Countering of Racism and an Institute for the Equality of Women

and Men acting as watchdogs to protect LGBTs, among other minority groups.²

Schematically summed up thus, the list of rights, protections and support systems is impressive. Some of the ostensible exceptionality and paradisiacal quality should be instantly qualified, though. A closer, comparative look shows that Belgium has been by no means systematically in the forefront or ahead of its neighbouring states in all the above regards (Waaldijk 2007). In fact, the leap to opening up civil marriage came after years of little to no political drive toward LGBT rights whatsoever. Its breakthrough was to a considerable extent dependent on the window of opportunity suddenly presented when a food contamination scandal in 1999 caused the Flemish Christian Democratic party to lose the federal elections so that for the first time in about 40 years a government coalition could be built without Christian Democrats. This led to a ‘modernization’ makeover of the country’s legislation with regard to ‘ethical issues’ such as euthanasia, soft drugs, the discrimination of cohabitants and the legal and social treatment of LGBTs. In some respects, moreover, we should recall that the driving force behind legislative change was European rather than national, with Belgium being forced, like every EU member state, to introduce antidiscrimination legislation (although the Belgian parliament did choose to extend the law’s reach beyond what was strictly required by the EU). Finally, the 2007 law on transsexuality, which was passed without input from organized Belgian trans* activists, is very strict, psycho-medically conceived and heavily binary in the rules it lays down. For instance, it enforces sterilization and does not reach beyond transsexual people to ensure the protection and rights of the wider constituency of trans* people or the intersexed.

To such qualifications should be added the perennial caveat about the gap between theory and practice – or in this case between the enactment of legislation and the achievement of actual social equality. Two striking reminders of such a gap have been, first of all, the fact that years after national and international adoption rights were extended to same-sex couples very few male couples have actually managed to complete a national adoption and none an international adoption; and secondly, the warning sounded by a recent comparative international survey among 16-year-olds, which suggested an unexpectedly high rate of what social scientists now prefer to call homonegativity (rather than outright homophobia) among Belgian youngsters in this age group, a fact which has caught many politicians and activists by surprise and cast a shadow on optimistically posited correlations

2 A step-by-step historical survey of the enactment of LGB-friendly legislation in Belgium may be found in Borghs and Eeckhout (2010). For an extended discussion of several of the key points listed, see Paternotte (2008), Motmans et al. (2009) and Dewaele and Paternotte (2010).

between the enactment of LGBT-friendly legislation and the social acceptance of sexual minorities.

The Belgian LGBT Movement?

As my introductory survey should have helped to make intelligible, there can be no such thing as a Belgian LGBT movement. There is a Flemish movement with a relative monopoly in Flemish civil society, and then there are a number of Francophone organizations in Wallonia and Brussels, most of which are only now in the process of professionalizing and collaborating with each other. In Flanders there has been a single overarching rainbow coalition for quite a while now (we will get back to the issue of nomenclature in a moment); it unites almost all Dutch-speaking LGBT groups in the country, which currently number close to a hundred. On the Francophone side meanwhile, the landscape has been divided mostly between three organizations and associations: the Brussels-based *Tels Quels*, the up-and-coming *Fédération des Associations Gayes et Lesbiennes (EAGL)* and the recently expanding *Arc-en-ciel Wallonie*. For well over a decade now the contacts between Flemish and Francophone LGBT activists have happened most structurally through the *Belgian Lesbian and Gay Pride (BLGP)*, which has been organizing an annual pride in Brussels since 1996. The platform of political demands publicized on that occasion is drawn up jointly by Dutch-speaking and French-speaking LGBT political activists.

As a Flemish political activist myself I feel best qualified to discuss the Flemish landscape here. Historically, moreover, it makes good sense to focus the discussion like this. The centre of gravity of the Belgian gay and lesbian movement has traditionally tilted toward Flanders. In the early 1990s the dominant Flemish umbrella organization, then called *Federation of Working Groups on Homosexuality* (abbreviated as *FWH*), began to receive substantial support from the Flemish government so that a professional structure could be set up. In 1995 the Flemish government even decided to appoint a Minister of Equal Opportunities, who among other things had to develop an equal opportunities policy specifically tailored to LGBs (note the absence of Ts in this abbreviation – I will come back to this as well). Especially in the latter half of the 1990s and early 2000s the Flemish LGB movement regularly undertook public actions and managed to get its demands on the political agenda through systematic lobbying, which led to most of the legislative changes and social policies described above. In the absence of a similarly well-developed movement on the Francophone side and of any governmental equal opportunities policy for LGBs (let alone LGBTs) there, public opinion and the press during those same years were much harder to mobilize in Francophone Belgium. Until very recently Francophone politicians have felt little pressure from within their own LGBT constituencies.

The demand to open up civil marriage to same-sex couples, symbolically no doubt the most conspicuous assimilationist move in recent years, also grew out of the Flemish LGB movement. Within that movement activists were fairly unanimous about trying to realize their demands for equal rights through a parliamentary decision based on a political majority rather than through principle rulings by the courts. The movement consciously opted for a pragmatic approach, which preferred dialogue to conflict in its dealings with political authorities and the most crucial players in civil society. Deliberations with politicians, press conferences, political actions, lobbying, well-underpinned dossiers and political debates ensured that the Flemish LGB movement was able to put its stamp on political discourse. By arguing for the opening up of civil marriage the Flemish movement was staking everything on the principle of equal treatment. Here was a concrete demand furthermore which could be realized within a relatively short term, contrary to the more theoretical but not very pragmatic demand for a strict legal individualization – a strategy more favoured on the Francophone left.

The Question of Self-identification

The issue of labels and self-identifications is always fascinating and telling for whoever is interested in queer theory. In 2002 the *Federation of Working Groups on Homosexuality* restyled itself as *Holebifederatie*, for which the most literal English equivalent would be *GLB Federation*. In the early 1990s the word *holebi's* had been coined in Flanders analogously to the then-emerging abbreviation GLBs (soon to be superseded by LGBs) in English.³ Different scenarios circulate about when and where the term was invented or launched, one of them involving a decisive moment of media attention in 1992, when a stridently homophobic professor at the Catholic University of Louvain picked up the term and used it dismissively. What is clear is that the word was intended from the start as a substitute for a full-length enumeration of *homosexuals*, *lesbians* and *bisexuals* (in Dutch these words are nearly identical with their English equivalents). It soon caught on within the movement itself, where it was proudly flaunted and used as a practical solution to the problem of categorial enumeration. By the second half of the 1990s the Flemish media began to adopt the term increasingly as well, so that *holebi's* became the standard designation in general speech – at first only in the plural, then also in the singular: it is perfectly normal nowadays to talk of yourself in Flemish Dutch as a *holebi*, as if one could be a gay man, a lesbian and a bisexual all in one.

3 In Dutch, an apostrophe is used to mark the plural, hence: 'holebi's' and, later in the chapter, 'homo's' to mark these as specifically Flemish usages.

It should be noted that this evolution is entirely culture-specific: across the border in the Netherlands, where a slightly different variant of Dutch is spoken, most people are still clueless about the term. There the cultural habit is to talk in terms of *homo's*, even when the whole range of sexual and gender minorities is meant. This is a sociolinguistic fact worth pondering in the comparative queer-theoretical context of a book like this, since in Anglophone environments (especially the US) the tendency to get hung up on words and labels has been considerably greater. Naming may be an important way of symbolically acknowledging minorities and rendering them socially visible, yet it appears to stand in no immediate or simple correlation to actual societal change and the spreading of acceptance. Whereas in terms of legislation and social policies the Netherlands and Flanders are quite close in how they deal with sexual and gender minorities, in terms of referential labels they have been drifting apart and in one case (the Netherlands) have held on to what may seem hopelessly retrograde and politically incorrect. It is in other words perfectly possible to have cultural landscapes (as in the US) where a fair number of people go out of their way to make room in the language for ever-expanding designations like LGBT*2IQ and GLBTQQA while the political, legal and social position of the designated citizens may be inferior to what we find in another, more progressive and accepting culture in which the standard reference is still, insensitively, 'gays'.

Some French-speaking Belgians meanwhile have begun to borrow the Flemish term *holebi* as well, or more frequently have come to adopt the similar *lesbigaytrans*, which has the decided advantage of including trans* people. In any case, by the new millennium the word *holebi's* had completely caught on in Flanders, so much so that the General Assembly of the Federation decided to change its official name to *Holebifederatie*. Interestingly however there has been no further linguistic evolution since then. Thus what was still a relatively queer and inclusive linguistic innovation in the early 1990s seems to have hardened into a somewhat inflexible mainstream term. This is probably symptomatic of a movement which is not only much smaller but also more homogeneous than in larger, more multicultural and metropolitan-driven Western nations. By comparison with such nations the Flemish LGB movement is almost totally white and largely middle-class; and it has effectively managed to swallow up the more radical activist groups which used to be around as well. Less internally contested and divided than many of its sister organizations in other countries, the Federation has also proved rather efficiently manageable and politically effective. Being relatively homogeneous and united and not much pressured by a radical, queer intellectual fringe, Flemish LGB activists found it easier to reach a consensus during the 1990s about prioritizing political action in middle-class terms of normalization and assimilation: even those activists who in an Anglo-American context would have aligned themselves more readily with sex radicals

or queer contestants of the marriage institution tended to accept the symbolic significance of opening up civil marriage and adoption and put their shoulders to the wheel.

This is not to say that Belgium has been wholly impervious to international trends and has not recently also witnessed the emergence of groups who define themselves in queer terms and derive inspiration from queer international examples. In Flanders in recent years there has for instance been *Queerilla*, though as the name suggests this group has no wish to become a dominant player: influenced by alter-globalization activism and anarchism it has been operating on a very loose, anti-institutional basis without taking much structural hold in the social landscape (it now takes the form principally of a Facebook group), as is the case also with the sometime DIY-zine *QueerGazet*. The queer-inspired initiative which appears to show most staying power is based in Brussels: run predominantly by Francophone Belgians, *Genres Pluriels* presents itself on its trilingual website (French-Dutch-English) (<http://www.genrespluriels.be/>) as an increasingly structured platform out to heighten '[v]isibility of people with fluid, trans' [sic] and intersexed genderidentities [sic]'. Among the activities it enables and supports are those of DKB, *Les Drag Kings de Bruxelles*. Such new initiatives postdate much of the mainstream political activism from the late 1990s and early 2000s and have not, as far as I can tell, led to fragmentation or schisms so much as to a growing diversification within the landscape of activist Belgian LGBTQIs.

Institutional Underpinnings of the Flemish Movement

We should probably add some Foucauldian flesh to this skeletal survey by including a brief reflection here on the Flemish movement's institutional underpinnings. When it comes to effecting political change in legislative and policy terms, the movement appears to have profited from an offshoot of what a feminist scholar, Alison Woodward, has called the 'velvet triangle' in Belgian politics. This is her term for a semi-formal, semi-informal network of policy-makers, academic researchers and representatives from civil society, a large number of them women. This velvet triangle has sprouted a lavender variant preoccupying itself with nonconfrontational ways of furthering LGB emancipation and assimilation. As a result, unlike what is usually the case in an Anglo-American environment, in Belgium it is official policy-makers themselves (both politicians and their administrations) who have come to fund the kinds of policy-oriented academic research as well as the grassroots lobbying power which in turn have been instrumental in changing legislation and introducing socially innovative policies. In the absence of a similarly government-subsidized counter-lobby this has managed to be highly effective, especially given the ease with which any

well-organized group is able to obtain access to politicians in a small country with six parliaments and several hundreds of parliamentarians.

The net result of this is that the Flemish LGB movement has managed to acquire a measure of political clout well beyond what one would normally expect from the handful of volunteers actively engaged with trying to change legislation and policies. Clearly such political effectiveness is inseparable from the financial underpinnings of the movement. It did not take long before the government subsidies to the *Federation of Working Groups on Homosexuality* in the early 1990s became substantial. Some of the subsidies were also anchored longitudinally, which made the organization less dependent on changes in political coalitions or the whims of individual ministers. For quite a time now the Federation has been able to operate on an annual budget of nearly one million euros, about 90 per cent of which is state-subsidized through three Flemish Ministries (Equal Opportunities, Social-Cultural Action and Education). Thus the Federation manages to employ a staff of about 15 full-time units – a figure which has been relatively stable for years. In this typically Western European type of sociopolitical organization it is the State itself by and large which pays for those groups in civil society that in turn lobby the State. From a queer critical perspective this undoubtedly has a surreptitiously normalizing and deradicalizing effect on the Flemish movement in ways that threaten its autonomy: since most of the funding is project-based, the movement must focus its operations on those projects it is able to sell to politicians and government administrations. As a result, it does not have the means or time to pursue more radical social policies of the kind more often found among non-government-supported queer activists elsewhere. One wholly unsurprising outcome is that the movement has arguably become desexualized in its public discourses and actions, so that *holebi's* in Flanders have come to seem more like a metaphysical human subspecies with invisible or irrelevant sex lives.

A Paucity of Queer Theory in Academia

To the mainstreaming and assimilationist tendency as a result of being funded directly by the Flemish government should be added another important institutional context: that of the state of Flemish – and until recently quite simply Belgian – academia. The lavender triangle just mentioned includes a very narrowly defined sort of academic: empirical sociologists who are able to provide government agencies with the statistical facts and figures needed to devise social policies. Several valuable surveys have thus been conducted and for a number of years there has been a State-subsidized research centre at the University of Antwerp devoted to furthering equal opportunities, with one full-time researcher working on LGB issues and, less securely, another

specializing in trans* issues. But beyond this, Flemish and Belgian academia presents a relative wasteland. There is no such thing as a minimally developed field of queer theory; there is only a handful of scholars who take a part-time interest in the field as it has developed in the Anglo-American world and are barely able to integrate this in their own teaching; and there are occasional PhD students who frequently have trouble getting the necessary scholarships and are usually pushed out of the system after finishing their dissertations. There is no professional network or communication channel, there are no journals, and with the exception of the odd book by Judith Butler none of the important studies in queer theory get translated. It is not usual for university libraries to hold many books on queer theory, or to have subscriptions to the important journals.

As Foucault would be quick to remind us again in this context, the academic flowering and impact of a system of thought like queer theory crucially depends on a specific institutional politics and ideology: in an academic landscape like that of Flanders (and Francophone Belgium, for that matter) queer theory has great difficulty taking root institutionally. As the field has developed in Anglo-American academia it seems to depend on a number of institutional conditions which are either absent from or underdeveloped in Belgium. For one thing the field seems to require a thoroughly inter- and cross-disciplinary habitus which is reflected in programmes in the humanities, in individual course offerings as well as in research opportunities. This kind of habitus is much less developed at Belgian universities, where students are channelled more strictly into relatively closed specializations from the moment they enter university and are not so strongly invited to engage critically with more encompassing social theories. In an Anglo-American environment the emergence of queer theory also seems to have profited from a competitive, elitist university system, with its relatively high staff-student ratio and the resulting possibility of offering a wide range of elective courses, including gender and sexuality as standard critical perspectives. The Flemish university system, which in the humanities and social sciences has no selection procedure for incoming students, is marked furthermore by exceptionally low tuition fees and is relatively underfunded, turns out a narrower range of scholarly specializations and is organized around fewer courses offered to larger groups of students.

For a collective field of queer theory to develop moreover, a sufficiently large-scale intellectual culture has to be in place which is challenged and stimulated by the complexities of a multicultural and metropolitan society. Unfortunately the market for such a fully developed intellectual culture, especially in Flanders, is very small. Nor is the region's historically shaped anti-urbanism or its political dynamics conducive to a constant close engagement with questions of diversity at the level of gender and sexuality. Finally, the flourishing of queer theory presupposes the institutional existence of fully-fledged graduate and PhD

programmes which have the critical mass to invest in the development of sophisticated social theories. In the Flemish (or indeed Belgian) context, such intensive graduate and PhD programmes are largely absent.

Although I see no reason to consider the situation for queer academic work in either the UK or the USA anything like ideal, it should be clear that in the absence of the nexus of institutional conditions just mentioned there cannot even be the beginning of a shared academic discourse, let alone the development of a discursive or disciplinary field. As a result, particular types of knowledge and self-knowledge as they have been developed and come to circulate in Anglo-American queer theory are frequently foreclosed, disabled or stunted in Flanders – and as far as I can tell again in Belgium overall, though the evolution at Francophone universities seems to me more positive in this regard: work inspired by gender studies and queer theory now seems to be spreading faster there.

Ignorance, Goodwill, Compromise: An Insider's View

This brings me, finally, to the more personal, necessarily anecdotal experiences which have prompted me to come up with my subtitle, 'Ignorance, Goodwill, Compromise'. For about five years now I have been a pink elephant in the Flemish LGBT movement: someone who combines activism as a volunteer with the institutional position of an academic who does teaching and writing in the field of queer theory and LGBTQI studies. (The pink elephant on the Francophone side is David Paternotte, a young political scientist who wrote his PhD dissertation on same-sex marriage in Belgium, France and Spain).

Close readers will have observed an unsteadiness in my way of referring to the Flemish movement through abbreviations: sometimes I have written LGB, sometimes LGBT. This is for the sake of historical accuracy: I would not wish to pretend that Flemish trans* people were always and everywhere included in the story I have been telling simply because the favoured international phrase happens to be LGBT nowadays rather than LGB. For almost all of the recent history surveyed above organized Flemish trans* people were absent from the story. Indeed it was barely possible to speak of any self-organizations. There were only small, usually short-lived self-help groups for transsexual people, but either these did not have staying power or they were at loggerheads with each other. It is only in 2007 that the General Assembly of the GLB Federation voted to include trans* people among its constituent groups. Even then the move was a proactive one, more inspired by international precedent than grassroots requests. It was by the same token deeply problematical since it could easily be construed as an imperialist gesture on the part of organized Flemish LGBs, who decided all by themselves they would now also start speaking for trans* people. The main

purpose however was to make available a materially supportive structure that was already in place so as to allow Flemish trans* activists to organize themselves. Predictably the transition was not easy, though at this point in time it appears to have worked: through the material support provided by the Federation, trans* activists have managed to join forces across Flanders and build their own activist platform. Their voice is beginning to be heard and policies are beginning to be developed. For the first time in history the coalition agreement of a Flemish government also includes points of action (which are supposed to be binding) to improve the quality of life for trans* people.

As a participant observer I have been struck by a number of unexpected occurrences in the course of this self-transforming process. The first thing that surprised me was to see how many LGB activists, even within the small political caucus which has been such an effective lobbying force, initially resisted the inclusion of trans* people. The main reason, as far as I could tell, was not one of political or ideological principle so much as of ignorance. The issue appeared wholly alien to many of my co-activists and filled them with considerable anxiety. To my even greater surprise, many protested they wanted nothing to do with the issue of *gender*. Insofar as the word had any discursive currency at all it was being translated instantly into a topic of concern only to the women's movement. Quite a few activists proved simply at a loss when confronted with it. Even within the Flemish LGB movement itself, then, many needed to be taught the most rudimentary basics about gender as a social construction which is crucial to the understanding of homophobia, as well as about the historical connections between militant feminism and the gay and lesbian emancipation movement. This was one very tangible way in which I was suddenly confronted with the effects of absent knowledge types and discourses in Flanders as a result of an insufficiently developed academic environment. Somewhat naively I had taken for granted that those activists with a college or university education would know the basics about gender and sexuality as well as the history of emancipation movements. It turned out that many of them did not.

This was further illustrated when the Board of Directors of the Flemish Federation started to debate the question of whether and how to adapt the name and official mission statement of the movement as a result of our now also including trans* people. The name of *Holebifederatie* kept transgendered people invisible, nor did our mission statement or our list of political demands include anything about gender issues. As a board member myself I proposed to draw up a memorandum that could be used at all levels of the movement to launch the debate. I wrote a seven-page text in my best didactic prose, providing a bit of historical background, making a case for inclusiveness and solidarity, explaining why it was better not to change our name by simply lengthening the established term *holebi*ʼs, teaching briefly about the nexus between gender and sexuality, pleading for sexual and gender diversity, and proposing a modest plan of action.

I had a lesbian friend with a PhD in queer studies read the memorandum to see where further clarifications were necessary, and then I sent my text around. The response was somewhat bewildering. Nobody disputed anything I wrote, but I found several of my fellow board members stumped. I was apparently raising the debate to a level of reflection they had trouble dealing with. Several confessed they thought the text quite, quite difficult, while it seemed to me comparatively simple fare at an introductory undergraduate level. I had never really stopped to consider before that, this being a grassroots organization dependent on a small number of volunteers willing to spend extra time on the Board of Directors, some of my fellow board members had probably not enjoyed a university education; and those who had generally combined daytime jobs with an activist commitment which tended to consume the rest of their waking hours, leaving them with little time (and as gregarious people not much inclination) to read up on LGBT and queer issues in academic books.

So there we were: nobody wanted to contest what the learned professor had written and nobody seemed eager to get much of an internal discussion going on the basis of the memorandum. And here was my final surprise: I was told it was impossible to have our various member groups debate this admittedly complex issue on the basis of such a long text: seven pages! What was needed were a few easy-to-digest paragraphs. Needless to say I was somewhat disheartened by this turn of events, although in the end I did join the subcommittee which got together with an advertising agency to devise a new name for the organization. The result is that the Flemish GLB Federation has not only changed its official mission statement so as to include gender expression and gender identity among its social and political causes, it now also has an untranslatable, punning new name (*çavaria*) with a baseline ('Standing up for GLBs and transgendered people') and a striking house style.⁴ The mission

4 An extensive footnote must suffice to give a sense of the rationale behind name, baseline and housestyle. *Çavaria* is an invented portmanteau word conflating the French greeting 'Ça va?' (widely used in Flanders as an expression of goodwill) and the Latin 'varia'. Basically the name is supposed to say something like 'I'm fine with variety' and is intended not only to avoid the plight of ever-extending enumeration (of the LGBT2IQ sort) but also to appeal to a younger generation increasingly unhappy with labels, categories or an antagonizing form of activism. In addition, the sequence of open vowels (all to be pronounced as if the word were Italian) is meant to be pleasant to the ear; and the oddity of the French cedilla (the little hook underneath the letter C, not normally used in Flemish Dutch) adds something quixotic and playful. Because the name itself no longer indicates any reference to sexual and gender minorities, the baseline is supposed to be included as much as possible so as to make the nature of the organization explicit and recall its activism (hence 'Standing up for'). In the new house style the name functions simultaneously as a logo since the three As in ÇAVARIA are replaced by blunted, slightly off-kilter triangles in different, warm colours (see www.cavaria.be).

statement, name, baseline and house style are full of compromises, to be sure, and have predictably met with some disgruntled responses and second-guessing. But this is only as to be expected in a democratic grassroots movement seeking to bring and keep together such a diverse range of individuals with particular interests and agendas, which in most other countries have led to internal splits and autonomous organizations battling it out with each other. And it may be that this mix of ignorance, goodwill and compromise presented by the Flemish/Belgian example is the best that can be achieved in terms of queer collaborative effort and coalition building, even at a national, let alone a transnational level. As the poet Wallace Stevens liked to say, and as queer theory loves to demonstrate even at the level of any individual's self-understanding: 'The imperfect is our paradise' (1997: 179).

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Chapter 2

Queer in Cyprus: National Identity and the Construction of Gender and Sexuality

Nayia Kamenou

Introduction

The Republic of Cyprus (RoC) is an economically advanced, nominally secular and multicultural European democratic state, which claims to respect human rights pertaining to diversity. Nevertheless, Cypriot society is deeply divided along national, ethnic, racial, sex, gender and sexuality lines. Thus, it is particularly instructive for demonstrating how nationalism relates to gender and sexuality in nationalistic, ethnically divided, postcolonial and traditional milieus. At the same time the Cypriot microcosm functions as a window on injustices that take place elsewhere in the name of national prerogatives, in a globalized and amalgamating world. Additionally, it exhibits how relatively recent phenomena such as Europeanization – ‘a process of structural change, variously affecting actors and institutions, ideas and interests’ (Featherstone 2003: 3) – and external policies, laws and trends promote or inhibit certain subjectivities’ inclusion in – or exclusion from – the body of the nation and from the dominant socio-political culture. Accordingly, this chapter will address the questions: a) How are gender and sexuality subjectivities constructed in Cyprus and what is their relationship to national identity and to other predominant discourses? b) How are ‘human rights’ and ‘Europe’ conceptualized and how do lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans* and queer (LGBTQ) rights operate in the Cypriot context? c) What strategies are needed in order for alternative identities to flourish and for European and global LGBTQ legal developments to be substantially applied on the local level? d) What role might queer theory play – or not play – in milieus where a strategically identity-based LGBTQ movement seems to offer the best hope for affecting societal and political change?

Historical Background

Cyprus came under British colonial rule in 1878. Greek Cypriot demands for union with Greece led to an armed struggle by the *National Organization of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA)* between 1955 and 1959. In 1950 Turkish Cypriots called for the partition of the island along ethnic lines and in 1957 they formed their own fighters' organization, the *Türk Mukavemet Teşkilatı (TMT)* (Mavratsas 1997: 718–20). The RoC was formed as an independent state in 1960. However, Britain, Greece and Turkey imposed independence without this being the aspiration of either of the two ethnic communities. Cyprus witnessed more inter-ethnic conflict, especially from 1963 to 1964 and in 1967. Some Greek Cypriots, still aspiring for union with Greece, launched a campaign of killings, violence and intimidation. These events culminated in a coup against President Makarios in 1974, orchestrated by the Greek junta.

On the pretext of offering humanitarian assistance to Turkish Cypriots, in July 1974 Turkey invaded Cyprus and it is still today occupying the northern part of the island. Both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots suffered forced displacement, the former to the southern and the latter to the northern part of the island. In 1983 the occupied northern part was unilaterally declared an independent state under the name 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' ('TRNC'), thus solidifying the separation (Papadakis 2003: 255–6, 2006: 231–4). The RoC became a full member of the European Union (EU) in 2004 and promptly used its membership to strengthen its negotiating position. Whereas previously the Greek Cypriot leadership had employed the rhetoric of human rights, upon signing the EU Accession Treaty in 2003, it started using the language of the accession agreement, the *acquis communautaire*, to put pressure on Turkey. This inflexibility culminated in 2004, when the late former RoC president Papadopoulos called on Greek Cypriots to reject the Annan Plan (Tocci 2007: 28–52, Richmond 2005, Featherstone 2003: 3–26). It remains to be seen whether a settlement will be reached and how the EU and the human rights discourse will be employed by both sides of the conflict, now that the current Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leadership appears to be more flexible.

Cypriot Gender and Sexuality Discursive Regimes

The modern and contemporary history of Cyprus, then, is enmeshed in the discourse of nationalism. Examining how gender and sexuality relate to nationalism and to national identity is important, since it highlights the detrimental effects of official discourses on aspects of life conventionally associated with the 'private' and 'personal' sphere. The dominant Cypriot

political and institutional discursive regimes are based on the idea that the civil society and private agents have a duty not to jeopardize the national project by seeking to alter the elite-engineered *modus operandi* of the national community. In particular, the discourse of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus posits the preservation of the traditional, heteronormative family and of an exclusively heterosexual masculine sexuality as the *sine qua non* of the continuation of national coherence and of Greek Cypriot blood lines and military might. Any alternative approaches, even if purely strategic, are condemned as ‘unpatriotic’.

Historically, naturalized gender performances and exclusively heterosexual sexuality have been fundamental pillars of the ‘nation’ and of national identity construction processes. National cohesion is achieved by uniting people under prescribed ‘correct’ and ‘respectable’ gender relations and sexual behaviours, which are projected as essential for national survival (Yuval-Davis 1993, 1996, Mosse 1985). In this manner, the concepts ‘nation’, ‘gender’ and ‘sexuality’ intersect and nationalist discourses become linked to discourses of corporeality and somaticity (Cusack 2000, Walby 2000, Yuval-Davis 1997, Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992, Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989). Just as in the context of national projects ‘womanhood’ is equated with femininity and female sexuality with procreative heterosexuality and modesty, so ‘manhood’ is associated with heterosexual masculinity and male sexuality with heterosexual sexual vigour (Nagel 1998, Pryke 1998, Sluga 1998, Parker et al. 1992, Mosse 1985).

The most influential hegemonic institutional agent is the Orthodox Church of Cyprus. It has always been the main agency of nationalism on the island and has managed to turn local traditions into elements of national politics (Kizilyurek 1993: 60). Even nowadays, this relationship between the Church and nationalistic politics remains intact (Loizides 2007: 176). The Church supports political parties that uphold its ‘Hellenorthodox ideals and national values’: Christian Orthodox religion; Greek historical and cultural heritage; and devotion to the nation and to the heterocentric family (interview with Church Representative ‘0022’ 2009, Interview with Church Representative ‘0031’ 2009). In the Cypriot context, religion via the Church becomes a central aspect of identity politics, constructing realities, subjectivities and social exclusion practices, which it disseminates through the state educational system (Trimikliniotis 2004: 67–9, Zambeta 2000: 145–56, Frangoudaki and Dragonas 1997, 2001: 37–47).

Despite a government initiative in 2003 to modernize education in general (Demetriou 2008) and to reorient the home economics curriculum towards health and nutrition issues, the thrust of that curriculum remains unchanged. It initiates children into the heterosexual and heteronormative Cypriot social system, which celebrates the heteronormative family as the only imaginable type of family. The 2007 and 2008 instructions for teachers of the Cypriot Ministry of Education and Culture outline the targets of the course. An indicative list includes:

Students to realize ... the importance of marriage towards creating a healthy family within the conditions of current Cypriot reality ... the crisis of the family-as-value because of cohabitation outside marriage ... that the health of the nation depends on the health of women ... the position and the role of the *two* genders in the Christian religion ... [my italics].

Even when issues of sex and sexuality are addressed, the focus is on avoiding contracting sexually transmitted diseases through heterosexual sexual intercourse (Apostolidou and Fontana 2001: 173–83, 2003: 75–82). The concerns of LGBTQ adolescents are not addressed. Thus, ‘real’ Cypriot identity and ‘right’ Cypriot citizenship are equated with performing a specific religious, gender and sexual identity. On the other hand, in Cyprus, the fear of the ‘other’ is combined with homophobia, since defending a nationalist identity also means defending a sexual identity against threats from others.

As Stavros Karayanni (2004, 2006) explains, Cyprus’s historic turns – and especially the effect of the British colonizers’ discourses that both spread hatred between the two ethnic communities and for the first time depicted and delegitimized non-heterosexual male sexuality as deviant and inferior – caused a profound crisis in modern Cypriot identity. Guarding the boundaries of heterosexual masculinity – even through means such as appropriate cultural expression – became a central aspect of the attempts of Greek Cypriots to distinguish themselves from the ‘other’, the Turk, whose image was constructed both as barbarian and effeminate (Karayanni 2006: 252, 260). In Cyprus, defining national identity along sexuality lines led to repugnance towards men thought to be engaging in receptive same-sex sexual activities – as opposed to penetrative same-sex sexual activities that carry less, if any, stigma (Karayanni 2006: 261). In interviews I conducted with 32 Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot self-identified LGBTQ individuals, my gay male interviewees confirmed that this notion is still prevalent among both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. In such perceptions and discourses ‘the deviant’ is not defined by the nature of the sexual act in which he indulges, but by the fact of taking the part of the ‘effeminate’ and ‘passive’ role in the act. What is excluded from the realm of the thinkable is essentially a gender and not a sexual act.

Hence, in Cyprus, attitudes towards non-heterosexuality are directly linked to constructions of binary gender roles and to the heteronormative model of the family, which is thought to be the *sine qua non* of national survival and societal stability. The interests of the nation are essentially defined by the interests of the political and religious elite, while their actualization is inextricably linked with preserving the current sexist and homophobic order. As Karayanni (2006: 261) nicely summarizes it: ‘In male public discourse, the taboo of homosexuality confirms male privilege and, through reassurance, generates fresh rigour, pleasure, and confidence in embodying a *male*,

heterosexual, and Hellenic national identity [my italics]'. Therefore, in Cyprus homosexuality is not just a type of sexual activity. Articulated as an identity it threatens to become an 'other', in a society that affirms its purity by ostracizing all 'others' (Karayanni 2006: 259–64).

I asked the LGBTQ participants whether they thought that, regardless of their sexual orientation, men should be and/or appear 'masculine' and women 'feminine'. The answers revealed the existence of sexist and gender stereotypes. Almost all the gay women participants reported that they completely identify with the term 'woman' and that they do not like 'butch lesbians'. Almost all the gay men said that they are very annoyed by effeminate gays and that they do not want to be around 'sissies' who make fools of themselves, thus giving all gay men a bad name. Also, all the gay women participants distinguished themselves, as primarily interested in finding a loving partner, from gay men, whom they described as overly sexual. The answers did not differ between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots.

This raises a crucial question about how Cypriot LGBTQs understand 'normal' and 'abnormal' gender performances. Their answers lead to the conclusion that for Cypriot LGBTQs performing virility – if men – and sexually reserved femininity – if women – is inseparable from preserving their self-respect. For them, dignity and propriety and their accompanying gender performances are inextricably linked with the belonging and exclusion boundaries that the national community prescribes (Yuval-Davis 1993: 624–7).

The infiltration of private, 'hidden' (Scott 1990) and non-statist discourses by nationalist rhetoric has to do with the symbolic violence this rhetoric carries (Bourdieu 2001). As Pierre Bourdieu (2001) explains, masculine domination – and to this I would add masculinist nationalist domination also – is so deeply embedded in our consciousness that we hardly perceive all of its dimensions and demonstrations. Masculine domination as symbolic power is eternalized through its dehistoricization and this dehistoricization takes place within the social institutions of the family, the school, the church and the state (Bourdieu 2001). This may well account for the fact that – at least until now – Cypriot 'others', like women and LGBTQ individuals, have scarcely taken advantage of the tools and opportunities afforded to them by the EU to claim equality.

Europeanization

An exception is Alecos Modinos. In the early 1980s Modinos decided to challenge those sections of the Cypriot Criminal Code that outlawed homosexual acts. After all, the RoC had adopted the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in 1962. In 1983, during a legal conference, Modinos publicly asked the then Attorney General whether the Code was going to change following the European Committee's recommendations to the RoC in the wake of *Dudgeon v.*

United Kingdom (1982). The Attorney General replied that recommendations are mere recommendations and that the RoC was neither obliged nor intending to act on them (Modinos 2009).

Despite Modinos's intense, decade-long lobbying efforts, the government's official position remained blatantly homophobic. Between 1986 and 1992 various ministers made statements to newspapers to the effect that they were not in favour of amending the law (Demetriades 2009, Millns 1994: 119, *Modinos v. Cyprus* 1994). Typically, the 1985–88 Minister of Justice and Public Order publicly stated that the law would change 'only over his dead body' (Demetriades 2009, Modinos 2009). In 1989 Modinos became the first individual to employ the right of individual petition afforded by Article 25 of the ECHR and challenge the RoC in the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). He filed a case arguing that sections 171, 172 and 173 of the Cypriot Criminal Code, which criminalized 'carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature', constituted a violation of Article 8 pertaining to the right to respect for private and family life (*Modinos v. Cyprus* 1994). In line with its reasoning in *Dudgeon v. United Kingdom* (1982) and in *Norris v. Ireland* (1991), the ECtHR decided in favour of the plaintiff. So, on 21 May 1998 – after various draft laws had been put before it – the Cypriot Parliament was finally forced to decriminalize homosexuality (Ovey and White 2006: 500).

The then President of the Parliamentary Committee on Legal Affairs tried to alleviate the concerns of Members of Parliament (MPs) by stating: 'Those MPs who recommend decriminalization do not in any way morally justify homosexual conduct; they merely recommend decriminalization because they realize what the political cost will be [of not decriminalizing]' (Vasileiou 1997a). When the law was finally amended, the majority of MPs publicly stated that they would not have voted for the amendment without the pressure from the EU (Demetriades 2009, Modinos 2009, Karayanni 2006: 258–9). The government's official rationale for the amendment was that not abiding with the ECtHR's *Modinos* ruling would imperil the country's stance in the Council of Europe. Additionally, it would jeopardize its national objectives, since non-compliance with European instructions would have a negative impact on the enforcement of the ECtHR's judgement in the *Loizidou v. Turkey* (1996) case (*Cyprus Mail* 1997, Hellicar 1997, Moivva 1997, Vasileiou 1997b), which concerned the consequences of the Turkish occupation of the northern part of the island.

However, the Church was not convinced by the 'dilemma' argument or by the 'political necessity to Europeanize the country' rhetoric. For the Church this strategic, politico-national, *quid pro quo* game was an ultimate threat to Cyprus's national survival. From 1997 to 2002 Archbishop Chrysostomos I and other high ranking Church representatives engaged in a war of libels and threats against anyone who supported or expressed tolerance towards Modinos's cause. The Church's stance was that its moral values did not and would not succumb

to the wishes of Europe or of anyone else (Vasileiou 1997a). In an interview on national television the Archbishop derided homosexuality and the *Modinos* ruling, saying that only enemies of the nation would endorse the decriminalization of homosexuality and that if Cypriots did not stand firm and tell Europe that homosexuality did not conform to the moral standpoint of the nation, eventually Europe would tell them to become homosexuals in order to be accepted in the EU (*Newsplanet* 1998). On several occasions he condemned homosexuality as an unutterable sin and tried to intimidate Cypriots by employing ‘the national problem’, saying that in case of a national threat it would be impossible to fight the Turks, if Greek Cypriot men were not ‘real’ men (Karayanni 2006: 258–9; Smith 2001). Thus, the *Modinos* case epitomizes the clash between predominant discursive regimes, to which gender and sexuality are subjected, and alternative discourses that seek to destabilize them.

Interviews with opinion leaders and decision makers from politics and the media, state institutions, academia and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have revealed that these people view ‘modernization’, ‘Westernization’ and ‘Europeanization’ as the transition from a traditional to ‘modern’ organization of public, political and economic life, without considering the effects of this transition on social relations that fall within the ‘private’ realm (Welz 2001). Although not sincerely committed to the concept of human rights, the Cypriot political elite attempted to balance notions of tradition and modernization, and national values and the values of Europeanization/globalization, in order to pursue its politico-national objectives through the EU platform. In the RoC public discourses have not been met with substantial oppositional or alternative discourses. Political parties, Cypriot scholars, civil society associations and movements and even some NGOs have adopted and continue to reinforce the official ideology of identity delineation. And of course in nationalist, patriarchal settings like the Cypriot one, challenging the established order carries heavier sanctions for those who already rank low in the socio-political hierarchical structure.

Nonetheless, the situation has recently started to change. In November 2009 a group of approximately 30 Greek Cypriots formed a new organization, the *Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgendered People of Cyprus (LGBTCY)*.¹ As one of the founding members reported, both a change in societal values that is inextricably linked to Cyprus’s Europeanization and the tools afforded by the EU to local NGOs – like financial assistance, training and the EU human rights

1 According to Yoryis Regginos of *LGBTCY*’s Steering Committee, the ‘T’ in the organization’s acronym stands for ‘transgendered people’ – rather than for ‘trans*’. According to Regginos, the groups’ members understand and use this term as an ‘umbrella’ term, which refers to all ‘transgendered’, ‘transsexual’ and ‘intersexed’ individuals.

discourse that recognizes LGBT rights as human rights – are the cornerstones of the new organization’s inception and the basis of its operation. She also reported that the Greek Cypriot *LGBT CY* is thinking of seeking cooperation with the Turkish Cypriot organization *Initiative Against Homophobia* (Interview with *LGBT CY* Activist Despina Michaelidou 2009). It remains to be seen to what extent this new collective will work within the current Cypriot structures or will seek a radical change of the sexuality *status quo*.

Moreover, through my fieldwork research I have discovered that ‘bicommunal’, same sex partnerships are proliferating. More and more same-sex couples are forming between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. In April 2003 the ‘TRNC’ opened a checkpoint on the ‘Green Line’ that divides the island, a move that resulted in the two ethnic communities interacting for the first time in almost 30 years. Apparently, LGBTQs from both ethnic communities have adopted freedom of movement not only as a legal human right but also as a value that transcends nationalistically driven hatred and isolation. Thus, not only do ‘bicommunal’, same-sex unions challenge institutionalized heteronormativity, they also redefine the boundaries of national identity. Additionally, these couples’ longing for recognition of their shared lives redefines the concept of ‘human rights’ from that which one ethnic community owes to the other, to that which allows people from the two communities to coexist; from ‘human rights as national rights’ to ‘human rights as individual freedoms’.

Proposing Solutions

Though official, public discourses restrict re-theorizations of the ‘nation’, citizenship, gender and sexuality, they do not render them unthinkable. In order to effect long lasting change, the following measures are needed: firstly, further research on how the infusion of the current nationalistic culture with global notions of social justice and equality could materialize; secondly, the employment of European and global political mechanisms, legal identities and the language of human rights; and thirdly, a specific course of action and the power of a bottom-up rather than a top-down educational ethic for redefining what ‘agency’ should involve beyond the agent’s own interests and what ‘human rights’ means.

Nationalism is inherently built upon systematic exclusions. However, there is an inherent, self-destructive contradiction embedded in all nationalisms. As Lloyd Kramer (1997: 538) has nicely phrased it:

The desire for unified nations can never be fully realized, partly because the existence of ‘others’ remains necessary for the conceptualization of the nation and partly because unity in any community is challenged by the presence of

different narratives about reality, different cultural traditions, and different sexual and ethnic identities.

The 'nation' cannot establish its 'ego' (Bauer 1924), unless it constantly negates its fantasy for unity by ostracizing some 'others' from its body. This 'othering' that the 'nation' performs, which is essential to its being, is also its weakest point. Those whom the 'nation' challenges have a reciprocal relation to it: if the nation is shaped by what it opposes, the opposed, the outcast, has an impact on how the nation, national identity, gender and sexuality are debated and defined. This impossibility of the full actualization of the fantasy of the nation offers marginalized groups the opportunity to destabilize predominant discourses and to project alternative narratives and interpretations. Sexuality politics as transversal politics, that is politics that place non-heteronormative desire above heterocentric nationalist claims, are promising. Transversal politics as 'a framework of dialogical politics across differences' (Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler 2002: 341) has the power to eradicate nationalist discourses' subjectivization projects against LGBTQ individuals. To this end, bottom-up reforms and a grassroots educational ethic are needed. If LGBTQ people from both ethnic groups organize in cooperation and seek alliances with transnational LGBTQ movements, they will increase their chances of eroding the current nationalistic, homophobic discourses.

Equally, what seems to be promising for moving from nominal to substantive gender and sexuality equality, not only in Cyprus but also elsewhere, is revisiting the role of human rights and of European and global mechanisms. If they are relocated from the sphere of official rhetoric to the terrain of 'everyday life', (Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov 2004: 35–52, Brubaker 1996) human rights and Europeanization will continue to promote human rights equality, including LGBTQ equality. A strategic utilization of the EU human rights discourse would also expand the space in which several types of desire could be articulated and expressed. As Wendy Brown (1995: 96–134) argues, rights in the form of politicized identity employment do not necessarily only circumscribe and regulate personhood. Rather, they can emancipate the subjects produced through regulatory discourses – such as the LGBTQ subjects – since rights 'function to encourage possibility through discursive denial of historically layered and institutionally secured bounds, by denying with words the effects of relatively wordless, politically invisible, yet potent material constraints' (Brown 1995: 134). In other words, rights operate beyond the level of the legal and of the political, on the level of the symbolic. Therefore, what they confer is not solely a position within temporal and spatial power structures; it is the possibility to push perpetually the boundaries of the universal – or not so universal – historical or ahistorical, cultural or acultural, contextual or acontextual notion of 'humanity'. This is a sort of anti-essentialist first step

choice, when having to balance powerful nationalist discourses and masculinist state prerogatives with sexuality equality objectives. Hence, in the relevant literature, ‘Europeanization’ is understood not only as the convergence of national policies and the harmonization of legal frameworks, but also of ideas and values (Featherstone 2003: 11).

In the past, the EU discourse and the values embedded in the concept of ‘Europeanization’ have been strategically limited to their external dimensions, both by the Greek Cypriot and by the Turkish Cypriot political elite, in order to gain advantage over external enemies (Featherstone 2003: 3–26). Nonetheless, as the *Modinos v. Cyprus* (1994) case has proven, by employing European mechanisms and values even a single individual can redefine agency and place sexuality and gender in the centre of action. More such moves could stimulate the generation of a grassroots group consciousness and subsequently lead to more extensive social mobilization.

Thus, the strategy I propose is to open a ‘first door’ for Cypriot LGBTQs out of invisibility and into the public arena through the use of already established and institutionalized identities. The strategic employment of non-internalized, non-circumscribed political identities and legal categories, such as ‘gay’, ‘lesbian’, ‘bisexual’, and ‘trans*’ has already proven productive in various contexts, even if individuals do not always or completely associate with these categories (Baynes 2000, Herman 1994, Hunt 1990, Williams 1987). In short, the Foucauldian view that institutional power with its methods of modern governance aims at objectifying the individual is not without merit. However, this is not a one-way relationship; the individual is not completely powerless and calculable. Through active negotiation of the dominant discourses individuals have the ability to ameliorate their position and gain control over their lives.

Europeanization and other top-down effects may promise progressive change. Nevertheless, heteronormativity and heterocentrism, nationalism’s patriarchal ideological control and the andronormative starting point of reality and history also need to be challenged. An important step is problematizing the discourses that interpret non-heteronormative sexuality as diametrically contradictory to national survival, by placing sexuality at the centre of analysis. Sexuality as a lens of analysis of the ‘national society’ and of identity has been almost completely ignored in Cyprus, since theoretical debates have been infused by the discourse of nationalism. Queer theory by contrast uses sexuality to expose the essentialisms and limitations embedded in all constructions of identities. From this perspective, identity politics does not necessarily mean that personal experience is confined within group political stance and group identities need not necessarily be dogmatically internalized by group members. Identities and political stance are most often symbolic, non-ontological, evolving, changing labels and strategic manoeuvres (Bernstein 1997, 2002, 2005, Gamson 1997). As such, not only do they allow for differentiations within groups, but they also serve as a framework

of reference towards challenging categories or identities which, through time and after initial success has been achieved, cease to be instrumental.

Nevertheless, queer theory should be aware of its own hegemonies and exclusions. ‘Neutralizing the naturalization of dehistoricization’, as Bourdieu (2001: vii–ix) prompts us to, does not necessitate the complete eradication of gender and sexuality categories. Successful political and legal claims to equality and to societal inclusion require increasing the number of thinkable and legitimate sexuality categories or making them more inclusive; not eliminating them. This holds true not only in small, traditional societies – like Cyprus; it applies even in ‘Western’, secular contexts, where seemingly progressive policies and popular, subversive discourses mask widespread inequalities. As Martha Minow (1993) has argued, abolishing gender and sexuality categories allows discrimination to continue and increase, while we lack a language in which to make claims against discriminatory laws, norms and practices.

Some postmodernists’ rejection of identities leaves them exposed to numerous criticisms. One of them is that by rejecting identities even for strategic reasons, they are in fact reinstating and reinforcing the need for a notion that they are ostensibly arguing against; that is, a universal human position that can operate outside power and its constraints. Additionally, if all identities are effects and enactments of powers that always reside in them – as some postmodernists claim – and if identities do not express a way of being, what happens to resistance, agency and concrete political actions (Hekman 2000, Nussbaum 1999, Whittle 1996)?

Conclusion

The case of Cyprus raises questions about the effects of Europeanization and globalization and about European and global mechanisms’ role in balancing national claims and individual and groups’ demands. I have argued that the divisions and exclusions that permeate the Cypriot milieu cannot be separated from the nation’s inclusion and exclusion identification cues. As the case of Cyprus demonstrates, refusing or failing to employ any identity or category in a politically engaged approach does not evade marginalization and its consequences; rather, it allows for their unopposed perpetuation. And the consequences of such marginalization worsen when subjectivities overlap. Regardless of the numerous and valid critiques against identity politics, pragmatically, they remain the best approach for fostering a minimal group consciousness and coherence and for stimulating mobilization.

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Chapter 3

Queer in England:¹

The Comfort of Queer? Kittens, Teletubbies and Eurovision

David Nixon and Nick Givens

Introduction

The development of LGBT legal equalities in the UK can be traced back to the European Convention on Human Rights (1950) and its more recent adoption into law as the Human Rights Act (1998). One example from several individuals who used the Convention to press for legal change in the UK is Euan Sutherland, who complained in 1994 to the European Court of Human Rights that the differential ages of consent for homosexual activities between men (18) and women (16) violated his right to respect for private life under Article 8 of the Convention, taken in conjunction with Article 14 (European Court of Human Rights 2001). In 1997 the Court concluded that the complaint was valid; after two Bills to equalize the age of consent in the UK were defeated in 1997 and 1998, equalization was finally made law by the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000. Other examples of UK legislation supporting LGBT rights include the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003; Civil Partnerships Act and Gender Recognition Act (both 2004); Equality Act (2006). The Equality Bill that is before Parliament, at the time of writing this chapter, proposes to draw together the various statutes concerning a range of diversity issues including 'race', gender, age, religion, disability and sexual orientation. Equalities are often advanced, or restricted, in the detail of wider legislation: for example, the Children, Schools and Families Bill (2009–2010) seeks to ensure that all young people receive at least one year of sex and relationship education, requiring state schools to teach pupils from the age of 15 about contraception and the importance of stable relationships including civil partnerships, and forbid the promotion of homophobia; a late amendment that would allow faith schools to teach sex education 'in a way that reflects the school's

1 At the time of submitting this chapter, the (1997–2010) New Labour government was still in power in England. This is the administration to which the chapter refers.

religious character' is seen by some as a loophole that would allow requirements to promote equality and respect for diversity to be circumvented (Woodcock 2010).

This legislative background informs and is informed by social/cultural changes such as the Civil Rights movements of the late twentieth-century. Rooted largely in a Judaeo-Christian tradition of justice, the equalities agenda focussed around gender, 'race', disability and sexual orientation created and solidified movements and communities which led to challenges to the prevailing order. For example the Gay Liberation movement, initiated by the Stonewall Riots of 1969 in New York, expressed the twin intentions of discrediting psychiatric and medical models of homosexuality, and of attempting a large-scale transformation of society. By the mid-1970s, this had given way to an 'ethnic model' committed to establishing gay identity as a legitimate minority group – the 'gay community', whose official recognition would secure citizenship rights for lesbian and gay subjects (Jagose 1996). Although the practice and thinking of individuals and institutions in the UK had begun to shift over the past 40 years, the Stephen Lawrence enquiry about 'race' and the Metropolitan Police (McPherson 1999) and the discussions within the Church of England about sexuality suggest that there is further work to be done to embed equalities. Both liberation and ethnic models also now co-exist with the more radical queer.

The field of education has reflected many of the trends and processes just described, has been at the centre of some of the sharpest conflicts and has been used politically and socially as a tool in a wider philosophical debate. Indeed, it might be true to say that education has formed and shaped the debate about sexualities in the UK. One example of this was the much reviled Section 28. As part of the New Right agenda in the 1980s, Section 28 sought to impose on local authorities a particular view of sexualities, repressing and restricting the emerging public debate. In the context of schools it was hoped that 'family values', including heterosexual marriage, would be buttressed by outlawing the 'promotion' of 'the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship'.

While the legislation was muddled on two counts – not applying directly to schools but to local authorities, and not preventing work around sexual health – it nevertheless had the desired effect of encouraging teachers to self-censor in what was in any case regarded as a problematic subject area (Harris 1990; Smith 1990; Epstein 1994). The symbolic effect associated with it, was to 'signal official and legal disapproval of homosexuality, which both reflects and produces inequalities' (Epstein 2000). Section 28 had always been regarded by the LGBT community as a totemic piece of discriminatory legislation. Its removal from statute in 2003 (2000 in Scotland) was part of a wider UK Government agenda to extend civil rights amongst LGBT people, some of the details of which have already been described.

Another strand of the educational debate has been more utilitarian. Rivers (2001, 2004) argues for greater equality for LGBT people in schools

on grounds of achievement and well-being: homophobic bullying in schools correlates with absenteeism, truancy, early exit from full-time education, self-harm and suicide. These views are supported by Stonewall's 2007 report (Hunt and Jensen 2007: 6) describing the experiences of young gay people in Britain's schools. For example:

Homophobic bullying is almost epidemic in Britain's schools. Almost two thirds (65 per cent) of young lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils have experienced direct bullying. Seventy five per cent of young gay people attending faith schools have experienced homophobic bullying. Even if gay pupils are not directly experiencing bullying, they are learning in an environment where homophobic language and comments are commonplace. Ninety eight per cent of young gay people hear the phrases 'that's so gay' or 'you're so gay' in school, and over four fifths hear such comments often or frequently.

The Labour government's later attitudes are reflected in publications like *Stand Up for Us* (DfES 2004) and *Safe to Learn* (DCSF 2008) which support an equalities-based approach. The *No Outsiders* research project, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, and based in English primary schools, seeks to:

[S]upport you [the teacher-researcher] in a creating a positive, inclusive ethos and challenging homophobic discrimination in your own school or classroom. This might involve, for example, including non-heterosexual relationships within discussions of family, friendship, self or growing up, exploring a range of identities and relationships through literacy, art, history or drama, or including a specific focus on homophobia within a class- or school-based initiative to tackle bullying. (Guidelines to participating teachers)²

Schools from three English regions were provided with a range of children's literature showing inclusive family structures or challenging gender norms, suitable for the primary age range. Teacher-researchers were encouraged to explore this material or discover their own ways of developing this work. An interactive restricted access website allowed teacher-researchers, university-based researchers and research assistants to share data and reflect on this data both experientially and theoretically. Almost from the project's inception, there were tensions both practical and theoretical between those who saw themselves working within a framework of human rights and equalities, and those who advocated the more radical approach of queer.

For example, in an analysis of children's teaching materials – *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson, Parneel and Cole 2005), *We Do: A Celebration of Gay*

2 Available at: <http://www.nooutsiders.sunderland.ac.uk> [accessed: 30 June 2010].

and *Lesbian Marriage* (Rennert 2004), and *ABC: A Family Alphabet Book* (Combs, Keane and Rappa 2000) – some of us were delighted that it was possible for teachers to use these books in the classroom, given memories of Section 28, whereas others were asking whether we were simply advertising safe, comfortable ‘gay families’, and avoiding anything that might disrupt this pseudo-nuclear setup: were we reducing queer to vanilla, and if so, what would a queer primary pedagogy look like?

This chapter looks firstly at the theoretical basis of these positions, and then at examples related to the *No Outsiders* project which illustrate how these arguments are worked out in an Anglo-European context. Our research questions concentrated on discovering how primary schools disrupted, disturbed and discomfited their dominant heteronormative discourses, and what happened – in pedagogy, formal and informal curriculum, in the lives of staff and pupils – when they did so. These questions are also framed to interrogate the value of queer in educational settings; to ask how queer fares outside its academic homeland.

Theoretical Backgrounds

The *No Outsiders* project situates itself within the mainstream of academic engagement with gender and sexualities. The work of theorists such as Foucault, Derrida, Sedgwick and Butler are then interpreted into the more specific arena of education. For example, a comparative study of the practice of sexualities in two schools (Youdell 2004) borrows from Butler’s theorization of ‘discursive performativity’ (Butler 1993: 13) in which the ‘performative functions to produce that which it declares’ (Butler 1993: 107). Youdell seeks to apply these ideas to empirical data ‘to examine the discursive practices that students deploy in order to resist performatively constituted wounded identities and (potentially) reinscribe themselves *again differently*’ (Youdell 2004: 481, original emphasis). Her minute analysis of classroom incidents describes how pupils who are marginalized as gay or suspect gay reclaim, albeit for a moment, an identity which is legitimate and intelligible. Walkerdine (1998) draws her inspiration from Foucault in her analysis of the ways in which maths texts position girls in relation to the idea of a rational, unitary subject. The concept of discourse and the relation power/knowledge helps her to understand why, historically, young women’s success in science has been deemed a deviation from the norm, how such regulation is enacted, and the effect that it generates. Her metaphor of ‘unpicking knitting, the wool still bearing the imprints of the knots which formed it into a garment’ draws on poststructural ideas about deconstruction to understand not only the processes involved in teaching maths, but the ‘web’ which holds these processes together: ‘to conduct what is called a *history of the*

present – Foucault’s terms for an examination of the conditions which produce our taken-for-granted practices’ (15).

More generally, Sumara and Davis (1999: 192) write: ‘Queer theory does not ask that pedagogy become sexualized, but that it excavate and interpret the way it already is sexualized – and, furthermore, that it begin to interpret the way that it is explicitly heterosexualized’. Our own work examines the experiences of student teachers and newly qualified teachers from a similar methodological position (Nixon and Givens 2004, 2007).

The importance of studying sexualities in the world of education is underlined by Bourdieu’s work on cultural reproduction and habitus. The inculcation of habitus within cultural and familial contexts, particularly amongst young children, provides the bodily ‘taken as read’ which is so dominant within sexualities discourses (Youdell 2006). The notion of habitus as ‘le sens du jeu’ (the feel of the game) (Bourdieu 1994: 45) or likened to the feeling of being ‘a fish in water’ (cited in Wacquant 1989: 43) provides not only an additional tool for exploring how schooling is sexualized, but may enable a middle way between the agency of social justice endeavours, and the more amorphous agency of postmodern discourse (Earle 1999).

Atkinson (2002) questions from a theoretical standpoint whether post-modernism and social justice constitute an impossible combination. She concludes that while ‘the responsible anarchist’ does not make for safe company, she is able to challenge underlying inequities, speak with and to the disempowered, imagine a new ‘real world’ social order, as well as deconstructing assumptions about justice and power. This chapter considers the same argument via three examples from *No Outsiders* data on classroom practice, teachers’ experiences and contemporary educational issues in Europe, and then seeks to answer the more profound question about the limits of queer outside the academy.

Kittens, Eurovision and Teletubbies

Ruth was asked to take a school assembly for Key Stage 1 children (aged five to seven) about her own family as part of the ‘Same but Different’ topic being developed through the project. She records the incident in her journal:

I had experienced homophobic comments at my previous school and was a bit concerned in my new school particularly as it is a predominantly Muslim school and homophobic comments are common.

I prepared the presentation and as I did it I was trying to focus on providing the children with ideas they could relate to. I included family photos and explicit reference to my son having two mummies but I also included my son’s kittens, a reference to him liking Pokémon and dressing up (with photos of course).

When I shared the presentation with a colleague I predicted that it would be the kittens which would most interest the children and of course it was. All the questions that they asked me about my family were about the kittens. When I told them that one of them disappeared and was found 10 months later at [a supermarket], the whole two mums thing faded into the background as here was something far more interesting! I had only one question about my family: one child asked me if my son had a dad. When I said 'No', she said 'Oh, is that because he's got two mums?'.

The assembly appears to have been successful in offering pupils an aspect of sameness with which they could identify. An analysis derived principally from an equalities/diversity perspective, however, might note that a lesbian teacher has been invited by colleagues to talk about her own family, despite the project offering curriculum resources (books, photographs and video) about children with same sex parents. One effect of this was to transfer the risk that heterosexual teachers may have experienced had they themselves taught positively about families incorporating same sex parents and the associated 'terror of being mistaken for a queer [which] constitutes the straight mind' (Thomas 2000: 27). A second effect was to increase the risk of Ruth's family experiencing homophobic reactions from pupils or their parents in the future.

Ruth's fear for herself and her family is a salient reminder of the spectrum of gendered violence that remains a possibility for all women: anecdotal reports heard by one author about harassment of children with same sex parents (including attacks on their homes) have all involved lesbian parents, i.e. women. Ruth's assembly encapsulates a dilemma facing the project, and inherent in much teaching about diversity and for equalities: the need to find a balance between highlighting commonalities on the one hand, and honestly recognizing difference on the other. The data does not reveal the motivations behind pupils' interest in the kittens: were they simply more interesting, or did pupils themselves recognize that the kittens were 'safer ground' than the family to whom they belonged?

From a postmodern/queer perspective, a starting point is Ruth's opening sentence. The first half, according to Ruth's experience, puts paid to the argument that primary schools are not sexualized (let alone heterosexualized) places. The second half links her heightened concerns for her own well-being with her experience of the school as predominantly Muslim, and her existing awareness of homophobic comments. For the duration of the assembly, such concern appears unjustified, since, as Ruth predicted, the kittens attract more attention than the two mums: it is as if childhood innocence is restored and all is well. On a broader front, however, her worries were in fact substantiated when subsequent events made her position at the school problematic. A queer methodology warns us of the ease with which we can position ourselves at

the liberal centre, thus further marginalizing those already at the edges. Here, this would risk designating the whole Muslim community as homophobic, extrapolating wrongly from comments which are unspecified, as well as denying the heterogeneity of Muslim communities (plural). Nevertheless, questions remain about the extent to which faith-based attitudes about homosexuality, deriving in this instance from Islam but also shared with some Christians and Jews, are affecting children's relationships at school, and about whether parents are aware of the consequences for their children's education and employability now that now that workplace expression of homophobic views may trigger disciplinary consequences. We might also ask how schools are preparing children to live with the difficulties of these intersections. In writing this we are also aware of our own hesitations in being critical of Islam – based variously in relative ignorance of this faith, in the desire to support poorer British communities of whatever sort, in a wish not to be designated as Islamophobic, and in the knowledge of some Muslim reactions to liberal positions. Yet to eschew any critique whatsoever of any Muslim views is unlikely to be constructive in the pursuit of LGBT rights and equalities, as underpinned by the legislative provisions described above. The considerable challenge for human rights based approaches to equalities is to share the unpicking of 'liberal' and 'illiberal' amongst all identities, rather than claim this work as the right of a few.

Alan, a teacher-researcher at a different primary school, recorded his fears and uncertainties prior to a trip with his male partner to Belgrade (Serbia) for the Eurovision song contest, after threats of homophobic violence. Following some discussion with the project team, he decided to air his concerns during a lesson about diversity, based on stories from the Second World War about Jewish persecution. He reported on the website the kind of threats invoked, the classroom experience and his return after the visit:

Homosexuals are sick people ... a big sin ... destroying health of Serbian nation ... If we see any gay couple in Belgrade ... it will be their last time to exchange their sentiments in their lives. (unsourced email)

I'm reading *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* to Y6 ... they are finding it hard to understand why Jewish people (were) in the concentration camps – one boy said 'They must have done something wrong' ... I wonder about using this email to make it real to the children, as they know I will be going to Belgrade and they know I am gay ... Today I told the children about the gay bashing in Serbia. They were shocked ... the class was split half and half on whether I should go. We had a wonderful discussion about the impact on LGBT people in Serbia if everyone stayed away.

There was a distinctly threatening atmosphere in the city that got worse as the contest drew nearer. The first gay bashing incident that people heard about

was on Thursday night, and on Friday night there were two more including one man from Australia who was hospitalized. And these were just the ones we heard about.

Then on the Saturday morning a newspaper ran a headline that was translated as ‘Devil’s Ball’ with a photo across the front page of two men kissing and three smaller photos of men kissing or dancing together. The text said something like ‘For Eurovision the devil comes to party in Belgrade’.

I arranged to meet a volunteer from the Gay Straight Alliance on the Friday morning as I had done a collection from my choir. He said it was fantastic to have so many gay men walking around the city as it showed the people of Serbia that gay people existed. And he said just to know that people in the UK were talking about what was going on in Belgrade made a huge difference to the spirits in the group. (Alan, website entry)

Alan took an equalities/social justice perspective in his classroom and in his website reflections, focussing on discrimination and prejudice, linking historic Jewish persecution with threatened contemporary homophobia, and invoking the international solidarity of the gay community. He used these examples to teach about prejudice in general and in particular, encouraged children to explore the roots of discrimination, and demonstrated to them the significance of personal solidarity by his decision to attend the Eurovision contest and by taking a cash collection to a pro-gay rights group. He also suggests implicitly to his class that gay people, their supporters and homophobia exist well beyond the school gates. A queerer perspective might highlight in the violent texts he quotes the discourses of medicine, faith and nationalism deployed against LGBT people, as well as questioning the existence of a unified ‘gay community’. The concept of hierarchized pairs (Derrida 1974) suggests here a taxonomy: straight-gay, healthy-unhealthy, benign-destructive, pure-sinful, belonging-alien, where the second term marks absence, the ‘hidden, forbidden or repressed’ (Bass 1978: x). Designating ‘the homosexual’ as unhealthy, destructive, sinful and alien gives a powerful motive for exclusion through actual or verbal violence. Showing pictures of men kissing as a proxy for sexuality is a familiar discriminatory tactic: heterosexuality encompasses all issues to do with relations between women and men, physical, emotional, economic and so on; homosexuality is reduced to bodily sexual activity. From the local Orthodox Church, images of hell and damnation are invoked via the headline citing the devil. The implicit message is that to undermine essentialist views of gender and sexuality is to challenge the good ordering of society and the cosmos (Holloway 1980). The use of imagery derived from Christian sources to attack gay people is a helpful reminder to those who would locate this discrimination solely with Islam. The appeal to the health of the Serbian nation can perhaps be read in the context not only

of recent 'ethnic cleansing' directed against Muslim neighbours, but also of a National Socialist past, and its annihilation of both Jews and homosexuals.

Interest from European broadcast media in the *No Outsiders* project led us to enquire more generally into how sexualities in schools were reported and represented in other countries. Our attention was drawn to a report from Poland about the potential banning of the BBC series *Teletubbies*, and the exclusion of the character of Tinky Winky.

A senior Polish official has ordered psychologists to investigate whether the popular BBC TV show *Teletubbies* promotes a homosexual lifestyle. The spokesperson for children's rights in Poland, Ewa Sowinska, singled out Tinky Winky, the purple character with a triangular aerial on his head. 'I noticed he was carrying a woman's handbag', she told a magazine. 'At first, I didn't realize he was a boy'.

Ms Sowinska wants the psychologists to make a recommendation about whether the children's show should be broadcast on public television. Poland's authorities have recently initiated a series of moves to outlaw the promotion of homosexuality among the nation's children. (Easton 2007)

While the report made clear that reaction had been fairly light-hearted, concurrent news from Poland suggested a more ominous intent. The right-wing Polish government was hoping (in a proposal with echoes of Section 28) to prevent any discussion in schools about homosexuality, and liberal UK newspapers ran stories about young gay Poles coming to Britain to find freedom. After a change in government, a more centrist approach has tried to repair damage within the EU that a previously homophobic policy had generated. Nevertheless, support from Poland's deputy speaker for a Bill to remove children from a parent in a same-sex relationship may indicate that attitudes have changed little. However the official at the centre of the teletubbies debacle has since resigned, and Tinky Winky is no longer threatened with psychological examination (BBC News 2007, Connolly 2007, Graham 2007, Grew 2008).

After this, it seems a little unfair to submit the *Teletubbies*, and Tinky Winky in particular, to a queer reading. However, this instance strengthens the arguments made so far. Behind the condemnation of this fictional character lies an anger about upsetting gender roles and fixed ideas about sexualities. A particular view of masculinity clashes with the transgressive handbag, and produces again the spectre of the subversive queer who seeks to undermine how society, the church, the nation conceives of the 'natural order'. It is easier to attack the other, than admit that this structure is relatively vulnerable, ultimately self-defeating and itself dependent on the other for its own self-definition. Add to this the fact it is a children's character and the unresolved

tension between children's innocence and their sexualization and Tinky Winky's potent symbolism is all too apparent.

This Polish incident, situated within its particular social and political milieu, is reminiscent for British readers of the New Right agenda of the 1980s, and for educationalists of the brouhaha surrounding *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* (Bösche 1983). This anodyne version of domestic harmony was proposed by one London borough for use in schools, and allegedly contributed to the Section 28 legislation. It may be that the book's very 'normality' was more challenging in its way than conveniently othered versions of so-called gay lifestyle (Rasmussen 2006). Smith (1994) suggests that the creation of the 'subversive difference' of the 'dangerous queer' and (usually) *his* exclusion concealed underlying political motivations: in the case of the UK, to disempower local authorities and to distract from other tensions; in the case of Poland, perhaps, to bolster a nationalist, anti-EU stance. In view of the previous government's connection to the Catholic Church, there may be parallels with the Eurovision experience and attempts to control gender boundaries and hierarchies. We note again that women (gay and straight) are almost written out of this debate. It might not be too far-fetched to compare the referral of Tinky Winky for psychological examination to the Americanized religious cures for homosexuality – again, the surreal turns sinister.

The Comfort of Queer: Limits and Liabilities

The central question of this chapter about the role and value of queer in educational action research now returns, with one further data set from the *No Outsiders* project under examination. Towards the end of the second year of the project, it was decided to confront the central theoretical tensions surrounding what has been described here as the drift from queer to vanilla. The one-day seminar entitled 'Queering the Body: Queering Primary Education' was described in the publicity thus:

One of the most fundamental questions the research team has been addressing since the start of the project concerns the problematics of the body. The team is concerned to interrogate the desexualization of children's and teachers' bodies, the negation of pleasure and desire in educational contexts and the tendency to shy away from discussion of (sexual) bodily activity in *No Outsiders* project work.

The seminar was timed deliberately to follow the 2008 'Queer in Europe' conference at the University of Exeter, and advertised accordingly. The content of the seminar is of less interest here than the media reaction to notions of

queer in education. The teacher-researchers were (rightly, perhaps) sceptical about how such publicity would be interpreted. Newspapers were less kindly, running headlines such as ‘Teach “the pleasure of gay sex” to children as young as five, say researchers’ (*Daily Mail*), ‘Primary schools “should celebrate homosexuality”’ (*Daily Telegraph*), and ‘Outrage at gay sex lessons for kids, five’ (*Daily Star*). The *Daily Mail* quoted Patricia Morgan from the right-wing Christian Institute as saying:

The proposal is that primary school classrooms should be turned into gay saunas. This is about homosexual practice in junior schools. The idiots who repealed Section 28 should consider that this is where it has got them.

The story was also carried by the British National Party (BNP) website in similar tones, and generated links to other sites and blogs advocating ‘Capital Punishment for the Paedo-Intellectuals’.

Here familiar strategies were deployed to safeguard what Butler (1990, 1993, 1994) calls the ‘heterosexual matrix’ or ‘heterosexual hegemony’. Homosexuality and paedophilia were deliberately conflated, public funding bodies were attacked by invoking the image of the hard-pressed taxpayer (an argument redolent of the 1980s), teachers’ professional judgments about age-appropriate pedagogy were discredited, and education about sexualities equality was dissociated from other diversity strands. Together with the element of faith, there is much overlap here with Eurovision and Teletubbies. The effect on the project was to place limits on work undertaken in schools: while perhaps gay or straight in their essentialized forms are not too upsetting, the frightening fluidity of bisexuality, trans* and queer are too much to deal with in primary schooling.

With these examples in mind, we need to ask whether queer is sufficiently robust to stand against discrimination in the ‘real’ world, or whether it is a luxury in countries where individuals can still publicly advocate (and carry out) planned homophobic violence; whether the expansion of the EU gives homophobia a new lease of life in EU politics; whether queer has a place in applied research. However it would be premature to conclude that queer itself as a theory or analytic tool thus becomes redundant.

The power of the human rights discourse lies in the clarity by which it names oppressive policies and practices, and the solidarity it mobilizes against these. It is thanks to this discourse that in the arena of sexualities, legislation has been developed in the UK to equalize the age of consent, to introduce civil partnerships, and to outlaw discrimination in the provision of goods and services. Those who have benefitted in personal terms, and those for whom these principles are important, are drawn to defend a human rights/equalities perspective.

A very current challenge for the proponents of human rights is the resolution of competing claims for different equalities. *No Outsiders* discovered this when working in those schools with strong faith adherence where sexualities equality was problematic. The competing demands for rights to religion and rights to sexual freedom are not easily settled. This is also recognized, for example, by the Association of Chief Police Officers, who write that ‘conflict ... has arisen out of the position adopted by a number of religions towards homosexuality ... attempts to reconcile these two sets of protection have upon occasion led to tension and confusion’ (ACPO 2007). Another weakness of this (equalities) discourse is perhaps a reluctance to examine its own assumptions, by deconstructing concepts like justice and equality. This might lead to the uncomfortable revelation that liberal humanism can itself be implicated in the practices of heteronormativity; the safe images of gay families may collude with class and ‘race’ divisions, which elsewhere contribute to exclusion. The social justice of liberal humanism may also fail to deconstruct assumptions about the ‘dangerous queer’, and the distinction between acceptable and censured sexual activities. Rofes (2000: 442, 459) writes about the challenges and compromises facing gay (male?) educators who wish to go beyond tolerance:

Are there ways to situate ourselves in relationship to activities common to some contemporary gay cultures such as cyber sex, drag, sex in parks or participation in leather subcultures, without denying our own interest or participation, feeling shame or being ejected from our profession?

We’ve made compromises and sacrifices that have gone unspoken and unacknowledged. We’ve gained limited entry into the classroom by denying authentic differences between many gay men’s relationships to gender roles, sexual cultures and kinship arrangements compared with those of the heteronormative hegemony.

Although queer owes some of its origins to AIDS activism, its more theoretical academic cousin necessarily attracts less of a following in its desire to destabilize all identity categories (Jagose 1996). Its effect however is to enable ‘constellations’ of identities to be considered (Youdell 2005) and therefore keep in play the complexity involved in education towards sexualities equality. Queer recognizes that faith discourses and secular discourses about sexuality are in tension, but it neither homogenizes faith communities nor denies secular involvement in differentially valorizing gender, class, or ‘race’. It does not accept the universalism of any argument, even a liberal one, and so in the example of Ruth, sees the risk of designating an already marginal community as homophobic. Queer refuses the easy retreat into simplified binaries, and refuses to reify either homo- or hetero- identities through knowledges and normalized images which are both partial and distorted (Talbot and Steinburg 2000). So in these data extracts the

rejection of the dichotomy Muslim-Christian reminds us that there are different and similar views on both 'sides' and that there are other intersections, like social class, which affect attitudes to sexualities just as profoundly. Although Serbian Orthodoxy and Polish Catholicism are significant in the responses analyzed, they should not be understood as synonymous, nor should Eastern Europe and new EU members be crudely agglomerated. There is in queer no comfortable home in which to find refuge, either for the researched or for the self-reflexive researcher – Butler (1994) speaks aptly of 'degrounding'.

Yet if this is the case, neither can queer assert its authority in the pair queer theory/social justice. Unpacking this binary means accepting that both have roles to play, and that as we have seen in this project, holding these in tension is comfortable for no one. The possibility of reconstructing differently and more equitably undercuts the accusation that queer is apolitical, and that deconstruction is simply destruction (Atkinson 2002). Providing laws can be repealed or amended, human rights are not necessarily incongruent with poststructuralism: their 'indeterminate' nature (Griffin 2008), 'not a closed book, but rather part of an ongoing conversation' (Clapham 2007), opens possibilities. While the boot, the fist and discriminatory legislation may require an immediate response based more in modernist notions of liberal humanism and social justice, essentialist binaries are also the commonplace of those who seek to promulgate homophobia and heterosexism. In the context of economic recession and the right-wing turn, postmodern and queer theory will continue to deconstruct the grounds of discrimination, and may offer a better chance of long-term social change towards equity in a world of complexity and fluidity.

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Chapter 4

Queer in France: AIDS Dissidentification in France

James N. Agar

This chapter presents discussion of three distinct, yet interlinking, issues concerning the recent and current state of queer in France, focusing particularly on how AIDS might be viewed as a major constitutive element of queer. The first issue centres on links between language, narrative and HIV/AIDS; how AIDS can be considered to be a linguistically constructed entity. A second section addresses the historical period 1981–early 1990s, examining that period via shifts within the realm of sexual politics, marked within academic and activist contexts by a turn from gay and lesbian studies toward queer theory. The third section outlines early responses to HIV/AIDS in France. I argue that the work of writer Hervé Guibert (1955–1991) can be used to illustrate *and* complicate the assumption that a queer narrative history (such as that within the Anglo-American academic context), however strategically constructed, can be assumed to fit unquestioningly within the French context. Guibert allows us to see the specifically French appropriation of AIDS discourse in the early 1990s while also reminding us, in the increasingly globalized and AIDS averse contemporary queer movement (Bersani and Phillips 2008: 31), that AIDS was always a central constitutive element of queer. Guibert, then, encapsulates a particularly queer moment borne by the collision of sexual politics, theories of gay identity, queer disidentity and AIDS. He becomes a dissident figure, a self-generating textual body fighting not to succumb to the identificatory taxonomies of medical diagnostics. Guibert is best seen as a figure identified in relation to disidentification, an autofictional entity who dramatizes a queer freedom *from* identity imposition rather than a freedom *of* gay identity. Guibert's disidentificatory textual performance becomes an activity which paradoxically renders 'him' (his writing that is him and is not reducible to him) a dissident figure. Disidentification becomes a posthumous form of identifiable *dissidentification*. As such, Guibert demonstrates much of the continuing difficulty of a simple insertion and application of the Anglo-US sense of queer within the specific French context. The slow turn in French culture from identity to queer might reflect, while equally differentiating itself from, a similar series of

shifts elsewhere. While not so much a case of the ‘exception française’, France perhaps becomes queer differently.

AIDS, Language and Narrative

The languages of medicine have long borne close links with rhetoric and etymology. The resultant *lingua franca* of the medical profession, codified and concretized through the exigencies of disciplinary formation and pedagogical *formation*, still seems like an alienating private language to the ear of patients. The ability of the medical vanguard, at the interface between the profession and the potentially sick public, to appear in masterful possession of a superior knowledge and language is one of the reasons why the doctor continues to inspire and has, historically, been revered (Porter 1999: 84). This competence for linguistic performance can equally be seen to be one of the reasons why s/he (and it has been predominantly *he*) provides such fertile ground for satire. Molière (1666), for example, makes much of his scathing attacks on the pompous and self-righteous scholasticism and Latinate socio-idiolect of the seventeenth-century doctor. Medicine and its diagnostic dissemination have, thus, always-already been closely linked with cultural issues around rhetoric, language and narrative.

The proximity of AIDS to linguistic and narrative construction is incontrovertible. In his (dis)seminal essay on the links between AIDS and cultural analysis, Crimp (1988: 3) declared in a well worn quotation that: ‘AIDS does not exist apart from the practices that conceptualize it, represent it, and respond to it. We know AIDS only in and through those practices’.

Although Van Leer questions the epistemological force with which anybody may claim to *know* AIDS, criticizing Crimp’s conflation of the ‘extant with the knowable’ (Van Leer 1995: 141), Crimp’s assertion remains forceful today. Crimp has since rearticulated differently his own relation to HIV/AIDS due to its tragic literalization in his own seroconversion (Crimp 2002). The ramifications of Crimp’s assertion are important. He highlights the ways in which practices of reading and analysis are central not only to important concerns within history (the pandemic itself), but also that such practices can change lived histories in very real and tangible senses. Crimp thus reminds us that individuals and communities must recognize that passive cultural consumption might be balanced by a more active participation in cultural construction: ‘[i]f we recognize that AIDS exists only in and through these constructions, then hopefully we can also recognize the imperative to know them, analyze them, and wrest control of them’ (Crimp 1988: 3).

Within an emergent intellectual tradition of the discursivization of AIDS, Treichler famously declared AIDS an ‘epidemic of meanings or signification’

(Treichler 1999: 11). In this sense, AIDS as a readable word and as a polymorphous referent of its acronymic self has always had a close relationship with language and narrative. The linguistic history of this ‘disease’ which is not a disease is, therefore, illuminating.

The result of surprising cases of mainly gay men suffering with PCP (pneumocystic carinii pneumonia which affects immuno-suppressed patients) and KS (Kaposi’s sarcoma, a rare form of skin cancer) in California and New York, a ‘gay cancer’ was reported by the Atlanta CDC (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention) in June 1981. The condition became known as GRID: Gay Related Immune Deficiency.¹ The acronym AIDS was finally accepted as the medical norm in 1982. It would not be long before alternative extrapolations of the meaning of the letters A/I/D/S were found. ‘Arse-injected death sentence’ was one common to the playground of my youth and ‘Adiós infected dick suckers’ is one which rears its head in Araki’s wonderfully irresponsible AIDS road movie *The Living End* (1992).

In France, likewise, the name of the ‘disease’ underwent a series of changes: *le cancer gay* and *la peste rose* being two names used in the French press during 1983. From the capitalized and full stop interspersed S.I.D.A. to the current *le sida*, the French transcription of AIDS is not only linked to the narrative of linguistic development within the Anglo-US world (wherein the French research teams of Rozenbaum and Montagnier were at the forefront) but is also curiously linked to an anecdotal personal narrative involving Rozenbaum who had a gay Brazilian friend called Sida. When the French research team were looking for a suitably Gallic name instead of AIDS, Rozenbaum recognized the anagrammatic link to his friend, selecting ‘Sida’ for the French name of the ‘disease’ (Martel 1996: 218). The convergence of medical issues with personal narratives of friendship sits comfortably with much of the *autofiction* written in response to AIDS within France, foregrounding the personally creative experience of a major, international medical and socio-political situation. Again like its English language counterpart, *le sida* is ripe for politically and ideologically motivated relexicalization: the FN (National Front) proposing *socialisme, immigration, drogue/délinquance, affairisme*² as the reinvented referents of *sida* in order to present it as the symbolic catch-all condition of everything which is seen by M. Le Pen as embodying the decadence of modern France. Equally at a conference on AIDS prevention for the young, a certain Professor Joyeux (one of the most ironically misnamed characters of any AIDS narrative!) relexicalized HIV as signifying *homosexualité, ignorance-innocence-incompétence, viol-*

1 The basic stages of this linguistic development in English are taken (with my analysis added) from Jeffrey Weeks (1991).

2 Socialism, immigration, drugs and delinquency, political and economic racketeering.

*violence d'une sexualité multi-partenariat*³ (Act Up-Paris 1994: 205–6). So the words AIDS and *sida* have come to be like empty signifying vessels of potential meaning construction to be liberally and rhetorically filled according to the political and ideological positioning of the beholder of the utterance. AIDS might be *America's Ideal Death Sentence* (Treichler 1999: 13), as much as a *Syndrome Imaginaire pour Décourager les Amoureux* (Treichler 1988: 33), or simply 'AIDS' a word which was an acronym but whose acronymic sense is often forgotten, a word which represents a 'disease' which is not a disease, a signifier which is not tied to a stable signified or set of signifieds, but which is saturated with potential connotative meanings which are absent from its own denotative self-presentation. The examples of these specifically French constructions show the cultural assimilation into the French context and language of an international phenomenon which was linked to an Anglo-American context and the English language. The cultural construction of the disease in France displays its indebtedness to previous international linguistic and cultural constructions while equally marking out its own national distinctiveness. This Gallic refashioning of an implicitly globalizing issue might also be seen to be at play within more contemporary assimilations in France of the Anglo-American 'queer' (Provencher 2007).

AIDS and Early Queer Theory

The crucial socio-political 'happening' which formed a catalyst to the establishment of gay liberation and what was to emerge later as gay and lesbian studies (henceforth 'gay studies') was the Stonewall riots of the night of June 17 1969 (the day of the funeral of Judy Garland: an instructive coincidence of history). These events are retrospectively taken as marking an epistemic shift which directly led to the establishment of the GLF, the Gay Liberation Front, one historian recording, in a somewhat over-triumphalist fashion, that '[t]he gay revolution – the last of the revolutions of the 1960s – had finally arrived' (Miller 1995: 368). Prior to Stonewall the domain of homosexual politics in the States had been dominated by the Mattachine Society (1950–1961). The name derives from a French theatre troupe in the Middle Ages which performed using masks in order to dramatize social commentary. The tentative approach of the Mattachines, favouring discussion groups and education in order to facilitate homosexual respectability within the wider society, was largely rendered ineffectual and *démodé* by Stonewall (Humm 2006: 383–4). Although often seen as an important, radical point of historical rupture, Stonewall

3 *Homosexuality, ignorance-innocence-incompetence, rape-violence of a multi-partnered sexuality.*

was only the beginning of the concretization of what might be described as the visible, audible emergence of 'gay consciousness'. These riots were also important as an integral part of wider Civil Right Movements in the USA and the more widespread fervent of radical thinking and activism within Europe focused around 1968.

Before 1968, the major group working within the realm of sexual politics in France since the 1950s was Arcadie, a homophile movement which, akin to the Mattachine in the USA, discreetly and politely worked for diminishing distrust of homosexuality. The main legacy for sexual politics of May 1968 was the development of the FHAR (*Front homosexuel d'action révolutionnaire*), which radicalized the agenda of sexual politics, reacting against the placid middle-class politeness of Arcadie. The FHAR viewed the suppression of homosexuality as a central element within the capitalist system of gender domination and succeeded in ensuring that sexual politics slowly became a point of concern and debate within intellectual circles and an agenda item within organized left wing politics. Despite this, unlike the post-Stonewall emergence of gay consciousness, there was not in France such a widespread and visible concretization of group visibility and gay politics. Foucault's works from the mid-1970s had shown a distinct suspicion about the politics and languages of liberation, and unlike in the USA, in France there was 'no more than a weak civil society' (Marshall 1997: 6) between the individual and the state, such that engagement in group identity politics was much less evident. It would take the AIDS crisis and responses to that for any sort of gay community recognizable as such from the Anglo-American tradition to develop in a post-2000, post-PaCS⁴ contemporary France.

The development of gay studies is marked linguistically by a post-Stonewall movement from 'homosexual' (seen as psycho-pathologizing) to 'gay'. This shift indicates a notion of sexual liberation being achieved through a constructivist agenda of identity politics. Crucial here are the work of Mary McIntosh, 'The Homosexual Role' (1968), and Foucault, especially his work on power (*Surveiller et punir/ Discipline and Punish*, 1975) and the first volume (*La Volonté de savoir*) of his *History of Sexuality* (1976). McIntosh's important article suggests moving away from seeing homosexuality as a condition whose causes can be traced and analysed. She views this understanding of homosexuality, based on her analysis of the development of homosexuality in Britain, as being part of a mechanism of social control which aims to categorize the forbidden from the permissible and the deviant from the non-deviant. Instead of adopting a fixed and fixing definition of homosexuality as a condition, she suggests instead understanding homosexuality as both a form of behaviour (sexual

4 Pacte civil de solidarité: a form of civil partnership contract, first introduced in 1999, which is not, however, specific to same-sex couples.

acts) and a social role which has developed historically. Crucially, the two do not necessarily co-exist and so sexual behaviour can be studied independently of social roles. The historically grounded distinctions which McIntosh's work develops between behaviour and category within the sexual domain provided a crucial theoretical grounding for the development of what would come to be known as the social constructionist approach to sexuality (Weeks 1998). The constructivist argument (based partly in opposition to psychoanalytical models of identity acquisition) posits the subject as being one which is discursively constituted through a process of subjection and subjectification in which (crucially for Foucault) the individual participates in a process which results in self-formation. Sexuality is thus not natural or given but is constructed and achieved through processes of becoming. For Foucault, power is notoriously productive as well as, in certain institutional practices, repressive. The practice of confession, characteristic for Foucault of modern man as confessing animal, can be integrated within a Christian hermeneutics of self which coerces individuals to look into their soul and exercise a wilful quest for purity (a process in which libidinal urges and their bodily manifestations are shameful as partly outside of the exercise of free will). Confession is also evident within a modern secular technology of selfhood like psychoanalysis. This linguistically based practice which we participate in becomes a process through which we produce the truth of sexualized subjectivity (it is, of course, usually singular). We speak ourselves into being, such is the process of the talking cure. Within Foucault's analytic, historical fiction, sexuality is an apparatus which we work through believing the process to be helpful and non-ideologically guiding us to the productive destination of true identity. Within this schema, sexual acts add up to the imposition of sexual identity which can then ever be further subject to inquiry, surveillance and knowledge, a subject position which is also an object of knowledge. Within the vast array of multiplying potentialities in the sexual domain (witness the growth of sexology through the nineteenth century), our confessing, work-based society constructs some as more politically acceptable and economically productive than others.

Foucault charts a shift of paradigm from a monarchical form of power which expresses itself through the right to take life toward a governmental form of (bio)power which is interested in harnessing the power of life for economic reasons (implying governmental intrusion within the realms of reproduction, for example). Foucault suggests, within this shift, that a normative, normalizing heterosexuality is seen to unquestioningly dominate through that which is not heterosexual, the non-normative, being subjected, as heterosexuality never has been, to critical questioning. In the historical, sociological and cultural work which by the 1980s was to be known as gay studies, the attempt was to achieve liberation and equality through speaking and positively representing alternative desires, often reversing the negatively framed psycho-pathologizing discourses

of sexology in order to give such discourse a more positive gloss through gay identifying self-expression. In turn this kind of approach was criticized as being reductive and accused of being ignorant of the ways in which it might be seen to shore up the macro-sexual ideology of Western culture. By proclaiming a specifically gay identity, that identity might be defined, constrained, quantified and further subjectified (and so become further subjectifying). In this vein, gay studies was increasingly seen as domesticated and domesticating, assimilated and assimilationist, conventional and constraining in its adherence to potentially essentialist forms of identity politics.

The turn of gay studies toward the newly relexicalized, celebratory 'queer', around 1990, is marked by the radicalization within the realm of sexual politics occasioned by a decade of AIDS (1981–1990) and new forms of academic criticism and philosophy which built on feminist politics to move toward a Foucauldian multiplication of shifting identificatory possibilities (the work of Judith Butler and Eve Sedgwick in particular). This queer marked a move away from identity politics, affirmative of non-judgemental acceptance of difference, toward a fluid, shifting and provisional non-acceptance of identity, more visibly contestatory in its ambivalence toward its own acceptance within recognized academic and cultural structures. While identity was seen as constraining and limiting, a process tragically literalized in the diagnostic imposition of AIDS identity on gay men in particular during the first decade of the epidemic, the paraphernalia of alternative forms of desire and sexual expression and activity were to be newly asserted and celebrated. The queer shifted in a major way in the Anglo-American context after 1996 when, with the widespread introduction of tri-combination therapies, AIDS became a manageable condition, less overtly linked to impending death: the PWA (person with AIDS, who would die from an AIDS related condition) became the PLWA (person living with AIDS). From this time forward the Anglo-American queer became decreasingly constituted by explicit and sustained reference to HIV/AIDS. This 'post-AIDS', newly born queer was less about the politics of sexuality which had constituted the birth of the queer in 1990, and became more of an international brand marked by the postmodernization of gay sexuality into the contemporary performativity of queer. This development within the queer realm has also come to be conjoined to a resurgence of an LGBT inflected agenda often focused around potentially homonormalizing campaigns for rights to gay marriage and adoption.

Despite the centrality of Foucault to aspects of queer theory and sexual politics more generally, this reading of him as one of the intellectual supports of the queer is distinctly international. The Anglo-American queer appropriates this reading of Foucault, who has not often been read in this way within France. There, he is cast more in the realm of continental philosophy and theory. He only returns to France as a queer commentator in the late 1990s and early 2000s, mainly via the work of Didier Eribon (1999) and French responses to

translations of some of the key figures of the international, Anglo-American queer; Judith Butler, Eve Sedgwick and Leo Bersani, for example. While the *emergence* of queer theory is indissociable from the start of the second decade of the AIDS pandemic in America, in particular, the situation in France is more complicated. France was a very fertile culture for the epidemiological spread of HIV and yet remained until very recently a barren ground for the flourishing of queer theory, a term for which there remains no Gallic equivalent. It is to this situation that we now turn.

'Le sida' and Guibert's Intervention

Early 1980s France was at the forefront of medical research into what were to become known as HIV and AIDS, Paris remaining a worldwide centre of excellence for treatment (Rock Hudson, for example, flew to Paris to receive treatments in 1985). Despite this, France was notoriously slow in developing a public debate about HIV/AIDS, and was equally slow in developing integrated and coherent government policies and infrastructures to deal with the emerging epidemic. This tardy response to AIDS contributes to the fact that France was, in the 1980s, one of the worst affected of European countries while this latter fact also compounds the indefensible former tardiness. Some of the reasons for this relatively slow response to AIDS in France include: the relative silence of the press and government in the period 1980–1984, when AIDS was seen in France as a quintessentially American concern; early denial in gay circles due to the fear of losing recently won freedoms given when Mitterrand was elected in 1981; the relative absence of a visible and political gay community (compared to the USA and UK) pressurizing from below as a voice arguing for change; government nervousness about tackling AIDS in times of political *cobabitation*, and, perhaps most problematic; the tradition of Republican universalism which sees all as equal partners in the Republic but which likewise tends not to recognize specific expressions of group difference such that universal inclusivity tends to exclude marginalized groups such as gays, the epidemiological community most effected by AIDS in the 1980s. France has difficulty in recognizing and sanctioning communities brought together through shared engagement in identity politics, a situation clearly evident in recent debates over the wearing of the veil. The integration inspired by Republican universalism does not always work in as evenhanded a manner as constitutionally inspired traditions or political theory suggest. Normality, uniformity and universality often coincide in an altruistically tolerant politics of integration which can all too easily turn into assimilation. As Velu (1999: 434) comments:

individuals' specific rights are subordinate to the general definition of rights guaranteed by the status of universal citizenship. Therefore particularities can exist but they must be contained so that the process of integration can take place. At such a price, integration really becomes assimilation and differences are only tolerated if they conform to existing models of citizenship.

France, then, was slower than the vast majority of the rest of Western Europe to focus AIDS policies at the groups most affected by the syndrome in the 1980s. This situation is marked by the startling fact that until 1987 it was illegal to advertise condoms in France. The situation has also developed since the late 1980s and early 1990s, in no small part due to increased visibility of alternative forms of sexual desire and lifestyle and thanks to the development of the PaCS and wider debates about individual and community identities and their representation within the strictures of a modern, multi-ethnic French Republic (Johnston 2008). Indeed, the post-2000 French Republic has arguably transcended the old limitations of the discourse of Republicanism.

We saw earlier that Treichler insisted that critical intervention around the 'epidemic of signification' must take place on the site where meaning is created, 'in language'. Intervening in debates around AIDS in and through language, image and rhetoric has become a very fertile ground within modern France; Guibert and Cyril Collard in particular marking the collective conscious of the French populace with their *autofictions*, video and film, respectively, and becoming highly mediatized figures before their premature deaths. Looking back at Guibert, he can now be re-cast as a pivotal figure. He came to widespread prominence in 1990 and thus sits, as a public figure, on the cusp of the extra-hexagonal shift from gay studies toward queer theory, a writer of AIDS whose texts in many ways exemplify the specifically French assimilation of the Anglo-American viral condition and its cultures. He can now be seen as a queer dissident whose texts perform a rethinking of gay identity as queer disidentification which is positioned as co-extensive with, and interconnected to, the French response to AIDS.

Guibert's adolescent dream, to write for the cinema, was something he achieved when his collaborative work with Chéreau led to *L'Homme blessé* (1984) winning the *César* for best original screenplay. The darkly disturbing combination of subterranean violence and gay desire in this film made it a distinctly queer representation when gay positive imagery might have been more the order of the day. His life as published author began in 1977 when *La Mort propagande* was published. Foucault (1996), in an interview with Bernard-Henri Lévy (from March 1977, originally published in *Le Nouvel observateur*) praised this publication as being a contribution to 'anti-sexographical' writing. For Foucault, 'sexographical' writing slowly moves toward saying what seems most unsayable about sex, a type of writing which sees in sex the truthful

and authentic key to the life of the individual and the species, a belief which Foucault had criticized in the first volume of the *History of Sexuality* (1976). Contrary to this 'sexographical' approach, Guibert eschews any build-up and states openly the very worst extremes, turning the at once desired, dead and subsequently mutilated body (including his own) into a joyous spectacle and thus, for Foucault, allowing the weight of sex as marker of truth to performatively evaporate within the theatre of textuality.

Despite the favourable comments and advocacy of the likes of Foucault, Guibert remained relatively little known. This changed when following the publication of *A l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie* (1990, henceforth *A l'ami*), Guibert became a big selling literary hit. Whether people were intrigued to read in the novel the extent to which Guibert supposedly outed Foucault, revealed his interest in sadomasochism or his death as being from AIDS is a matter of speculation. What is clear is that the book became the first French novel about AIDS to become a bestseller and that it allowed Guibert to reach a new and proliferating readership.

A l'ami is an autobiographical novel, an *autofiction*, rather than a 'classic' autobiography. The novel begins by suggesting that the narrator (Hervé Guibert) might be the first person to survive the AIDS which in the opening sentence of the novel the narrator claims to have suffered from for three months. The always-already fictional hope of salvation is in the form of a vaccine which the narrator's friend Bill (who works for a research-based international drug company) might be able to provide. During the development of the story of the potential salvation which comes to nought is interspersed, particularly in the opening third, a fictionalized biographical portrait of the closing months of the life of a well known, bald philosopher who was gay, interested in sadomasochism and who wrote a magnum opus on the history of human behaviour. This character Muzil is a thinly veiled portrayal of Foucault. The story of Muzil's death is presented as Guibert, the narrator, vicariously narrating his own death which will, he assumes, shadow that of Muzil. The character Muzil also becomes a trope for international travel and its links with expressing gay sexuality through sexual activity. Muzil spends significant amounts of time in America (as indeed did Foucault) and while there enjoys the pleasures of an organized and reasonably open, sexualized gay culture (bars, bathhouses etc.) which had been much less evident in France. He also, crucially, is used as a witness to the birth of HIV in the US context and the debates and discussions which it led to, the novel stating (chapter 11) that already in 1983 people were talking openly about AIDS and that such talk had strengthened solidarity amongst gay men. Translating and transferring those experiences back to France in the late 1980s, the novel displays the specifically French situation with regard to the then uncertain knowledge about the disease. In the US context AIDS had led to vibrant new forms of political action and communitarian cohesion, Muzil remarking that gay saunas were, in 1983, busier than ever (30).

Facilitating a queer multiplicity of shifting identificatory possibilities, from this US context and its influence on him, Muzil imagines a perfect hospital where identity can be constantly renewed and reinvented (23–5), imagining a response to HIV/AIDS which will not lead directly to stigmatization of the positive through enforcing on them a medically sanctioned form of diagnostic alienation. Such a vision contrasts sharply with the depiction of the hospital near Paris which, in the novel, Guibert visits for medical assessments and treatments. This striking description of the Claude Bernard hospital (51–60) stresses its geographical isolation from the life of (healthy) Paris while foregrounding the physical dilapidation of the buildings. Such a lack of care enshrined in the physical space where treatment takes place reflects the experience of isolation and alienating stigmatization which Guibert feels when visiting the hospital. The novel is a sustained attempt to re-order a life and refocus a body which is literally being torn apart by the work of HIV, while also being an attempt to graphically textualize this tearing apart.

The novel is equally a chronicle of the narrator's attempt not to succumb to the defining taxonomies of medical discourse. Refusing to be purely defined by the number of T cells in his blood, Guibert's novel mobilizes recognizable imagery to humanize the alienating medical situation, while equally charting the changing relation of himself to his changing body and self-perception and how this relates to, and is mediated by, his relations with others. Although the temporal frame of the novel is disrupted, there are individual histories and stories of AIDS in the novel – principally of Muzil and Guibert – and also a slightly wider macro-history of AIDS in (French) culture wherein the period of silence and denial moving through to fear, anxiety and panic can be traced through the individual lives depicted. There is even suggested in the close of the novel an acceptance, albeit an angry one, of the normalization of AIDS (which follows the period of fear). By the end of the novel the hope of Bill's vaccine is gone and the narrator comes to terms with the fact that he will live with, and die from, AIDS. Internalizing and appropriating AIDS in the way he does, while also resisting the subjectivization which it might lead to, a narrator called Guibert will return in subsequent novels which address AIDS but which also succeed in managing to write AIDS within a slightly wider frame.

Mirko Grmek, a French medical historian whose *Histoire du sida* (1990) was one of the first histories of AIDS in France, has praised Guibert's novel: it reminds its readers that while disease is a medical phenomenon, illness is a broader socio-cultural issue. The novel reveals some of the social and potential psychological attributes related to the disease AIDS while also, crucially, subjectivizing what medicine might try to see, or make to be seen, more objectively. The novel functions as a window onto a period of recent history in France which alludes to and is illuminated by different aspects of the same period, that is by AIDS and its links to language and by the broad shift from

gay identity politics toward queer disidentification. In this last sense, the novel reminds us of the processes at play in constructing different versions of history, questioning whose interests are served in history being seen in particular ways. Guibert's novel suggests identity is subject to constant reinvention of the body and its relations to others as well as to shifting re-evaluations of the links between somatic change and the psychological experience of it. The novel also demonstrates a de-censored attitude toward (the representation of) alternative forms of sexual activity and seems ambivalent to a polite and tolerant yearning for acceptance. It was highly criticized by Act Up-Paris, markedly different from the previous little-read (now out of print) AIDS writings in France. It is scornfully referenced, obliquely by some explicitly by others (Borel 1995: 232), who would write of AIDS in France after Guibert. To some it is an 'AIDS novel', a novel about AIDS, to others a 'Guibert novel', a novel (only) about Guibert. While the book itself textualizes in fiction some of the issues central to a Foucauldian pragmatic of aesthetic disidentification, it is also a salutary reminder to its readers in the post-AIDS queer world of combination therapies that there once was a time (read still *is* a time for some and especially in some places) when the interconnections of sexual activity, identity, politics and AIDS required (a) queer dissidence, an expressive force at odds with prevailing orthodoxies. From disidentification in his writing Guibert has come to be a dissident figure in France, a critical cultural reference around whom turn debates about the interconnectedness of sex, politics and AIDS and how best (not) to represent these interconnections. Guibert can be complementary to an understanding of what is both a medical *and* cultural phenomenon, an individual and collective concern, an issue for biography and autobiography, self and other, the healthy and the ill, queer and non-queer. AIDS *dissidentification* in 'Guibert' (his texts and their reception) reminds us that when we encounter the languages and narratives of AIDS in relation to sexual activity and identity, we become singularly queer.

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Chapter 5

Queer in Germany: Materialist Concerns in Theory and Activism

Ute Kalender

Is queer theory a merely cultural phenomenon? This question, although by no means confined to Germany (e.g. Hennessy 2000, Žižek 1997, Butler 1998), is of central concern to German queer theory and activism. By way of a response to the criticism this question implies, contemporary 'German' queer theory is always careful to include an element of reflection on economic conditions. And this in turn has led to a broad and differentiated conception of heteronormativity. In queer activism, in turn, queer subjectivities and queer spaces are continually interrogated with regard to their (supposed) commercialization. In order to show how this works, I first offer a brief outline of the materialist critique¹ of queer theory and activism in Germany. I then sketch in the 'responses' of queer theory and point up the 'materialist' dimension of queer politics beyond the academic field. In particular I shall be looking carefully at the negotiations surrounding queer subjectivities in the Berlin trans^{*2} community and the history of the Christopher Street Day.

1 The term 'materialist' encompasses a wide range of approaches such as critical theory, marxism, neomarxism, regulatory theory (Regulationstheorie), or governmentality studies. For a careful discussion of recent developments in German marxist theory see Haug 2004.

2 I use the term 'trans*' to point up the multifariousness and heterogeneity of the various forms of existence led within Berlin contexts. The term 'transgender' is often also used. It was coined by the American Virginia Prince, who in the 1970s chose it as a self-definition for all those who were unable or unwilling to live in the sex assigned to them at birth. About ten years ago, whole swathes of the Berlin trans* scene gratefully adopted the term. They were motivated by the desire to invoke less pathologizing connotations than transvestite or transsexual (e.g. Lode 2008: 18 on the reception of the term transgender in Berlin). I have the impression though that the use of the terms 'trans*' and 'transgender' is predicated upon specific processes of politicization and that the terms bespeak a certain proximity to the academic field.

The Critique

In the 1990s academics and activists in Germany began to discuss ideas associated with queer theory. Although feminist theorists working in the context of migration and the diaspora had demonstrated that the self is always a porous entity (e.g. Kapalka and Rätzkel 1985, Oguntoye, Opitz and Schultz 1986), it was Judith Butler (1990) who formed the main point of reference for the German queer movement.³ Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez (1999: 13) for example points out that, in the German-speaking world, the ideas of immigrant intellectuals or those working in the context of immigration or the diaspora such as Anita Kalpaka, Nora Rätzkel, Katharina Oguntoye or May Ayim failed to figure in debates about gendered subjectivities or theories of the gendered subject. According to Gutiérrez, their spheres of influence appear to be restricted to the locus of their writing: migration or the diaspora. Thus their contributions are regarded as only being relevant to a particular situation or as representing specific perspectives on society, rather than being perceived more widely as analysts of a fragmented gendered self. That is to say that they are regarded as empirical instances of a specific situation: that of the female immigrant woman or the black German woman. Hence it was mainly Butler's ideas that were adopted in order to call into question a gay and lesbian liberationist politics based on the notion of stable homosexual identities. Grounding politics in gay and lesbian identities, critics argued, far from doing away with the kinds of coercion attendant upon the ideal of a stable sexual identity, merely relocated them. Other 'arguably disordered' subjectivities such as intersexed or transsexual people were doubly discriminated against.⁴

It was not long, though, before queer theorists themselves came under attack. In particular, queer theory in Germany was criticized for not dealing with issues of economic oppression (e.g. Dietze, Yekani and Michaelis 2007: 130, Pühl and Wagenknecht 2001, Pühl 2003, Wagenknecht 2004: 203). The main objections were that queer theory:

1. Ignored the class differences between queer subjects; and
2. Failed to reflect the workings of capitalism as a system.

3 Key texts were *Feministische Studien* 1993, Pühl 1994, Wobbe and Lindemann 1994, Angerer 1994, Lorey 1996, Landweer 1990, Hark 1996, Genschel 1996.

4 See Woltersdorf 2003, who reconstructs the reception of queer ideas in Germany. He asserts that German Gender Studies ignored Butler's critique of normative heterosexuality, and instead focused on her deconstruction of the sex/gender-relation and the universal female subject. See also Hark 1996 and Kraß 2003.

The first point has led to a queer class theory which focuses on questions of inequality and distribution of wealth among persons who may be, say, heterosexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, trans*, intersexed, drag queens, drag kings or sado/masochists.

Among German academic queer theorists the main focus has been on the second point (Engel 2002: 194). Queer theory has been criticized not just for ignoring economic conditions but also for helping capital to become more flexible. According to these critiques, by calling into question the notion of a coherent sexual identity; by insisting instead on the fragmentation and pluralization of sexual identities; by stressing that the self is porous, that identities are the effects of practices and that it is possible to reinvent and to shape one's gender and sexual identity (Woltersdorf 2003), queer theory plays into the hands of the neoliberal ideology of compulsory individualization that lies at the heart of contemporary capitalism. Neoliberalism, so the argument runs, precisely requires subjects who believe that they can freely create their identity and construct their selves. And capitalism needs individuals who willingly shape their emotional economy according to specific aims which harmonize with economic goals (e.g. Phase 2 2001, Phase 2 Leipzig 2004, Phase 2 Berlin 2004, Wagenknecht 2005). This was the view expressed for example in *Phase 2*, a German magazine in which left wing positions are debated. The publication is largely male-dominated and indicatively heterosexual. But nonetheless German queer theorists took the charge very seriously (Pühl and Wagenknecht 2001, Pühl 2003, Wagenknecht 2004: 203).

Reactions

German queer theorists have reacted to this critique in various ways. In the current debate about intersectionality⁵ in German Gender Studies economic factors are often mentioned (e.g. Walgenbach et al. 2007). The notion of 'diversity management' in Gender, Queer and Trans* Studies is often explicitly distinguished from a neoliberal understanding of diversity (e.g.

5 In German language Gender Studies the term 'intersectionality' is widely used to refer to a new paradigm for the systematic investigation of relations of inequality and oppression. In order to acquire a proper analytical understanding of these, so the argument runs, it is not sufficient to assume an accumulation of different categories; rather these relations of inequality have to be seen as inseparably interwoven. Seen from such an 'intersectional' perspective, for example, it becomes clear that women with disabilities are not disadvantaged as women *and* as disabled people but rather that the category of disability often subsumes the category of gender: women with disabilities are generally not classified as women, rather they are subject to logics of asexualization and ungendering (Kalender 2010).

Dietze et al. 2007: 8). And at the Humboldt University in Berlin, several doctoral dissertations are being funded under the banner of ‘*Geschlecht als Wissenskategorie*’ (gender as a category of knowledge), which deal directly with the issue of neoliberalism.⁶

In German queer theory there is a wide-spread awareness of economic factors, such as relations of work and income, the work of sexual reproduction, or the question of whether precisely the dissolution of the nuclear family and the attendant emergence of alternative ways of managing work and care might not harmonize particularly well with neoliberal demands for increased flexibility and deregulation. Theorists such as Katharina Pühl (1994, 2001, 2003), Corinna Genschel (1996), Volker Woltersdorf (2003), or Peter Wagenknecht (2004) always situate their work in explicit relation to neoliberal positions (see also Bargetz and Ludwig 2007: 187–8; the projects of Kuster et al. 2010; and the new book by Antke Engel 2009 on aesthetics and neoliberalism). To this end they deploy a broad and differentiated conception of heteronormativity and interpret Foucault as a materialist thinker, who understood a particular dimension of capitalism. Wagenknecht (2004: 192) notes:

The rise of capitalism and the freeing of individuals from feudal relationships are associated with changes which Michel Foucault describes as the replacement of a web of affiliations – i.e. the ordering of society in (extended) families and households with a web of sexuality. With the dissociation of politics and economics on which capitalism is based (Marx), the bourgeoisie paved the way for rendering women’s bodies hysterical, making children’s sex an object of pedagogical interference, socializing reproductive behaviour, and relegating perverse pleasure to the realm of mental illness.

Antke Engel: ‘Regimes of Normalcy’

The social scientist Antke Engel, director of *que Üero*, the Berlin Institute for Queer Theory (Engel 2010), has developed one of the most advanced approaches in the field of German queer theory. Her concept of ‘regimes of normalcy’ arises from a committed investigation into the relationship between queer politics and the growing neoliberalization of society. Her theoretical model names two crucial mechanisms of subjectivation which occur simultaneously in neoliberal societies: rigid normativity and flexible normalization (Engel 2002: 76).

6 See for example the PhD-projects of Wibke Straube, Simon Strick, Daniela Wentz, Christina Altenstraßer. Available at <http://www.2.hu-berlin.de/gkgeschlecht/>.

‘Rigid normativity’ refers to the way in which certain lifestyles, genders, or bodies are socially excluded or disqualified and can be thought of ‘only as deviant, pathological, criminal or wholly incomprehensible within hegemonic conceptual paradigms’. Engel follows Butler at this point in emphasizing the multiple forms under which discrimination, exclusion, violence, or disadvantage can be exercised against those who do not fit the heterosexual matrix, which is still the dominant pattern in many societies.

Butler’s conception of the ways in which queer subjectivity might be constituted has been severely criticized. Critics accuse her of adopting Foucault’s idea of the productivity of power in a reductionist way. They argue that the notion of the heterosexual matrix entails too strong a focus on the law, repression and coercion. And they suggest that this focus prevents Butler from being able to grasp modes of subjectivation that operate *beyond* the heterosexual norm. In this view, even subjectivating practices that have nothing to do with the heterosexual matrix are reduced to it and subsumed under it (e.g. Engel 2002: 65, Lorey 1996: 32). It is in response to this critique, that Engel has developed the broader conception of heteronormativity that she calls ‘flexible normalization’. By this she means that in neoliberal societies there is no single gender norm, that can be defined and analysed, and that operates exclusively in order to separate people into the categories of the ‘homosexual’ and the ‘heterosexual’. Instead she identifies a plurality of norms that organize the social field and that can even be contradictory (Engel 2002: 76–7).

In neoliberalism, then, gender and sexuality are regulated not only by means of normative inclusion and exclusion, but also through a particular understanding of flexibility and freedom. Thus, for Engel, flexible normalization also instrumentalizes the seduction of self-definition. This seduction implies that neoliberalism operates by promising social recognition and access to privileges and resources to those prepared to work on their self.

In my opinion the complexity of the situation lies precisely in the fact that many people are simultaneously subject to both mechanisms. Thus a rigid binary gender division constitutes the normative framework with which all inevitably have to enter into some kind of relationship. At the same time, though, possibilities of individualized integration are offered by the market as a ubiquitously present (albeit not unrestrictedly available) temptation and linked with the positively sanctioned willingness to take ‘sovereign responsibility’ for one’s own life and to turn it around according to the principle of ‘flexibility’. Self-help techniques – from diets to psychotherapy, from ‘lifelong learning’ to efficient time management – appear as freely choosable ways of escaping the strait-jacket of one’s own identity, while at the same time the threat of the loss of social recognition leads to the acceptance of normative and normalizing regimes of normalcy (Engel 2002: 78).

This notion of ‘flexible normalization’ also refers to the processes whereby, in *certain* social contexts, a rigid heterosexual norm can be destabilized and formerly ‘deviant’ selves integrated into the logic of the market.⁷ Flexible normalization includes for example the display of queer desire in advertising, television series like *The L Word*, the German Civil Partnership Act (2001) (a German law that legalizes the marriage of gays and lesbians), the ‘discovery’ of lesbian couples as paying patients – as clients – by reproductive medicine (Bock von Wülfigen 2002, Engel 2003: 43), or diversity programmes in companies that propagate the rights of queer people in the workplace. Rosemary Henessy (2000: 135) notes in this sense:

Nowhere is gay more in vogue than in fashion, where homoerotic imagery epitomizes postmodern chic. Magazines firmly situated in the middle-class mainstream such as *Details*, *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Mademoiselle* have all carried stories addressing some aspect of gay life and/as fashion, and it is here that gay and lesbian visibility blurs readily into a queer gender-bending aesthetic.

The concept of ‘regimes of normalcy’ takes into account the different subjectivating⁸ relations of inclusion *and* exclusion, and underlines the ways in which repressive and productive relations of power intersect. It makes it possible to identify a tendency towards increased flexibility without suggesting that gendering nowadays has nothing to do with relations of power, that gender identities can be freely chosen, or that hierarchies are meaningless. And it allows for the fact that different partly conflicting logics of subjectivation can operate at the same time and/or on the same subject.

With this concept, then, Engel seeks to integrate an anti-capitalist perspective. As forms of cultural and economic oppression are often inseparable the *relationship between them* has to be analysed and attacked. The subject is the point at which broader social arrangements and individual constructs intersect, interrelate and determine each other. The workings of capitalism can only be adequately understood if subjectivities are taken into account, and if the *relationship* between cultural and economic, subjective and social aspects is analysed. Engel interrogates the often artificial divisions between culture and economy, between private and public and between the individual and society

7 More precisely: the integration of persons who identify as gays, lesbians or drag queens. Subjectivities such as the Tunte, intersexuals, trans* people, or BDSM practitioners are still not part of the hegemonic symbolic order. For the figure of the Tunte, see below.

8 The term ‘subjectivation’ refers to the finding of Michel Foucault that power in modern societies is exerted by the production of subjects: by separating, disciplining, and regulating people through different identities.

and seeks to understand the specificity of their connectedness. From her point of view, subjectivities and subjectivating practices need to be constantly and repeatedly questioned: Are they emancipatory or do they just affirm the status quo? Do they harmonize with wider economic goals or do they try to work against the economization of the private sphere?

Comparable questions have also affected queer politics in Germany. For example, negotiations of the opposition between the figure of the *'Tunte'* and that of the Drag Queen on the one hand and the history of the Christopher Street Day in Berlin on the other mirror these debates about the commercialization of queer subjectivities and queer subcultures.

***Tunte* vs. Drag Queen? Negotiations of Queer Subjectivities in Berlin Trans* Subcultures**

In seeking to exemplify the sometimes heated debates about the relationship between queer subjectivities and economic conditions using the discussions about the two labels *'Tunte'* and 'drag queen', the aim is not to establish which identity – the *'Tunte'* or the drag queen – is less commodified, more oppositional or more subversive. Rather I proceed from the position that both the *'Tunte'* and the Drag Queen are *postulated* identities, compounded of locally specific discussions, discourses, structures and material conditions in a way that can never be adequately grasped. In this context I would like to show that one important discursive distinction between the *'Tunte'* and the Drag Queen is to be found in the debate about the commodification of subjectivities. Before tracing these battle lines though, a few preliminary remarks about the two terms.

One highly problematical image that constantly recurs in discussions both of the *'Tunte'* and of the Drag Queen is that of the 'effeminate gay man'. The German version of Wikipedia (2010) for example says of the Drag Queen:

The term 'Drag Queen' probably derives from turn of the century British slang, where it referred to effeminate homosexuals in women's clothes. Somewhat later it acquired a counterpart in the 'drag king', which was used to describe usually lesbian women in typically male attire.

In much the same way, the psychiatrist Dorette Poland (1991: 73) remarks of the Drag Queen: 'For effeminate homosexuals wearing women's clothes serves to attract an active masculine partner'. Both statements exemplify dominant heteronormative assumptions. They presuppose two exclusive, for the most part implicitly biological, genders: man and woman, whose desires are supposed to be directed towards the opposite sex. Gestures, dress and speech are also supposed to correspond to standard norms of masculinity and femininity.

The lowest common denominator between the *'Tunte'* and the Drag Queen is that both call these heteronorms into question and subvert them. On closer inspection, though, differences become apparent in the historical contexts of the two terms. Thus it was in the context of the so-called *'Tuntenstreit'* or battle of the queens that the term *'Tunte'* acquired a certain notoriety. The aforementioned hegemonic association of *'Tunte'* with 'effeminate man', 'sissy' or 'man in women's clothes' was taken up by parts of the gay movement and used as a political battle cry (Balzer 2004: 60). The aim was to combat the pejorative implications of the association of those classified as gay with femininity. This also explains why the *'Tuntenstreit'* was also seen as a feminist struggle. According to Carsten Balzer, the Berlin ethnographer also known as 'Carla LaGata', the *Tuntenstreit* also entailed a feminist criticism of the devaluation of women and of everything 'feminine'. The bone of contention was that the self-designation as *Tunten* was directed not only against a heteronormative society, but also against masculinist norms within the so called gay movement (Balzer 2004: 62).

Even today the use of the term *Tunte* as opposed to Drag Queen implies an attempt to set apart a more radical part of the gay movement and a more fundamental criticism of a heteronormative social constitution. The performances of Drag Queens such as Ru Paul and Goldie are accused of being restricted to a specific space – that of the stage or the video clip. Equally, according to this criticism, Drag Queens wear drag only in these places, and their sexual and gender identity as 'obviously' male is never undermined. The *Tunte* by contrast is said to be never out of drag, even in everyday life, and her identity as a man is called into question in a wide variety of contexts. Balzer (2004: 48) puts it as follows: 'Tunten and Drag Queens differ in their gender performativity, their self-image and their chosen role models as well as in the niches in which they have been able to establish themselves in German mainstream society'. Hence Balzer sees in the *Tunte*, unlike the Drag Queen, whom he refers to significantly as Glamour Queen, 'an entertaining and (self-)ironic form of criticism of the male dominated, heteronormative mainstream society and of the genre of travesty itself' (Balzer 2004: 63, 2005: 125). In this sense the term *Tunte*, like queer or crip, is a resignification of a pejorative label used by the heterosexual mainstream. Mireille, a 40-year-old *Tunten* activist, notes: '*Tunte* was an abusive term formerly used by the heterosexuals, but we appropriated this term and transformed it in an offensive way for our own purpose as leftist gay people' (Balzer 2004: 60). And Yvonne, a 25-year-old *Tunte*, states: '*Tunte* is not simply wearing drag: it's the political attitude and activity that makes you a *Tunte*' (Balzer 2004: 61).

Over and above discussions about the performance of gender and generic criticism, it is today, above all, questions of commodification which serve to differentiate the labels *Tunte* and Drag Queen: the *Tunte* is contrasted with the Glamour Queen in the way she obstructively opposes the increasing

neoliberalization of subjectivities or rather the neoliberalization of a wide variety of different social spheres by means of a specific, economically favourable subject formation.

In Berlin trans* communities Drag Queens are often criticized for being commercial. According to this view, they merely seek applause, self-affirmation, and money when they perform on stage. They want to be integrated into the media mainstream – preferably as celebrated superstars or as admired divas. The beauty and perfection of their appearance and their performance as well as a certain nobility of attitude are important to them (Balzer 2004: 61). Feminists claim that Drag Queens merely imitate and reproduce hegemonic ideas of femininity: they serve male expectations and desires (Hamm 2007: 12). Neo-Marxists argue that Drag Queens are just another product of capitalism and a symptom of a hedonist society (Hamm 2007: 12, Stüttgen 2008: 18). Balzer (2004: 62) states: ‘Drag queens generally impersonate on stage famous international superstars like Marilyn Monroe, Kylie Minogue, Madonna or Marlene Dietrich, but they do so exclusively for entertainment value’.

Tunte by contrast see their gender performance as a criticism of a certain mainstream model of femininity. On stage they often perform ‘the woman next door: the girl on the supermarket till’ (Balzer 2004: 62). Because of this thematization of economically less privileged models of femininity and because the *Tunte* does not seek to be part of the media mainstream Balzer sees the *Tunte* as a less commercialized form of subjectivity. Personally, I do not think that the *Tunte* is the better or more subversive trans* person, since both the *Tunte* and the Drag Queen disrupt dominant patterns of heterosexuality – be this politically motivated or not. Nevertheless, Balzer’s work is interesting because she describes an anticapitalist imperative in Berlin’s queer politics. In this, she does undoubtedly reflect to a certain extent the reality of the scene. But Berlin trans* reality is not just *mirrored* in Balzer’s work. Her production of knowledge, her distinctions and categorizations both condition and are conditioned by this sensitivity to capitalist formations that informs so much German queer theory and praxis. In this sense, the *Tunte* is a subjectivity that is closely connected to the intense exchange between queer and materialist positions: the *Tunte* is a figure that emerged in the space these debates made possible.

The Kreuzberger Christopher Street Day

A further example of the impact of this neo-Marxist critique is the split of the Berlin Christopher Street Day (CSD) into the main CSD and the *Transgeniale* CSD, also known as the *Kreuzberger* CSD. The official CSD embraces parade floats advertising parties such as *Die Grünen* (The Green Party) or the liberal *Freie Demokratische Partei* (FDP) and the Berlin police. In 1997, when the organizers

of the main CSD introduced charges for floats, a splinter group seceded and established the *Transgeniale* CSD. The aim of the *Transgeniale* CSD was to draw critical attention to diverse forms of discrimination such as racism or transphobia and to criticize the commercialization of the main CSD and queer lifestyles generally (*Transgenialer* CSD 2010). The *Kreuzberger* CSD was directed against displacement, discrimination and commerce and was organized by several networks such as the *Transgender Netzwerk Berlin*, Gays and Lesbians from Turkey and TransInterQueer. Today the *Transgeniale* CSD embraces an agenda that also opposes socio-economic exclusion and hence for example stressed its solidarity with workers at Lidl, the supermarket chain that achieved notoriety this year for monitoring its workers via closed circuit cameras (*Transgenialer* CSD 2010). The call to the *Kreuzberger* CSD 2006 (*Transgenialer* CSD 2010) makes this radically heterogeneous and anticommercial stance as clear as ever and reads as follows:

POVERTY, PRIVATIZATION, HOMOPHOBIA, SEXISM and RACISM are no PRIVATE MATTERS. In the tradition of the uprising and the militant resistance above all of immigrant gays, lesbians and transgendered people in the USA on the 27th of June 1969 on Christopher Street a transgenial CSD will be taking place again this year. It will be the only one in Berlin to position itself historically. The Commercial Street Day of the Ku'Damm⁹ has been postponed because of the World Cup. We see ourselves quite consciously as a counterpoint to the World Cup, with its nationalism and hoards of bawling male drunks. We call on you to demonstrate and to celebrate, to express your anger at social conditions. Come in frocks, in drag or however the fancy takes you, bring signs and placards. Creativity and life instead of commerce and dumbing down. For a welcoming and proactive CSD in the midst of a society which increasingly thinks with its elbows. Because POVERTY is no private matter. It is socially constructed and exclusionary – we will break through the isolating tendencies with open microphones. If your boyfriend is in a deportation centre, that is no more a private matter than racist and fascist thugs. RACISM is a social structure like the SEXISM we were bombarded with during the World Cup and which made streets, neighbourhoods and whole cities into no-go areas for people of different skin colour, lifestyles and physical characteristics. And it is also no private matter that in the West of Kreuzberg the SPREEMEDIA project is selling off whole neighbourhoods and driving out the poorer inhabitants. Come and join us. The more the merrier.

The *Transgeniale* CSD also seeks to oppose the growing privatization of spaces in Berlin and self-critically reflects on the role of queer communities in this

9 The Kurfürstendamm, or Ku'damm, is one of the main shopping streets in Berlin.

process of commercialization. One statement in a speech held this year for example read:

The difficult thing about it is that in this game the boundaries between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are never absolutely clear. Even less commercial, more alternative venues contribute to this development. And often it is precisely lesbian, gay and queer culture, which of course is so wonderfully camp and colourful, which is harnessed for image campaigns. That is why it is more important than ever to take a clear stance (*Transgenialer CSD* 2010).

Thus the *Kreuzberger CSD* is a public display of ‘subversive’ queer practices that repudiates the commercialized and normative ‘main’ CSD and its subsumption into the representations and spectacles of neoliberal mainstream society. Furthermore it expresses a critique of state policies, and institutionalized heteronormativity and the normalization and integration of gay and lesbian identities. While the main CSD presupposes the existence of clearly demarcated gay and lesbian identities (which are in addition mostly imagined as white and in possession of German nationality), constructed as far as possible in harmony with neoliberal state policies, the *Kreuzberg CSD* insists precisely on the break between queer subjectivity and those neoliberal state policies.

With Engel, then, the *Tunte* and the *Transgenialer CSD* can be read as a call to develop modes of selfhood and forms of protest that fit a broad understanding of heteronormativity. From this perspective, modes of gendered and sexual selfhood are not just economically or culturally determined, but can also act as a point of purchase for bringing about social change. The *Tunte* represents both a materialization and a transformation of symbolic, social and economo-cultural conditions. In the last analysis, though, it is not a matter of presenting the *Tunte* and the *Transgenialer CSD* as more oppositional or more subversive than the Drag Queens or the Official CSD, but rather of highlighting their productive questioning of their own enmeshment in social settings.

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Chapter 6

Queer in Hungary: Hate Speech Regulation and the Queering of the Conduct/Speech Binary

Erzsébet Barát

Introduction

This chapter uses queer logic for re-thinking approaches to homophobia in Hungary by examining recent debates about the ethics of regulating hate speech in that country. As LGBTQI rights are not yet sufficiently enshrined in Hungarian law or in the cultural imaginary, the recent example of discussions about anti-Semitic hate speech serves as a precedent for thinking strategically about discrimination against other minorities. By analysing the ideological investments of the apparently oppositional discourses for and against regulating speech 'behaviour' in Hungary, I am able to show that, although both positions equally give voice to their general ethical disagreement with hate speech, they come to be caught within the same liberal view of human rights. When imagining a parallel debate about homophobia, such a liberal approach would be in tension with queer thinking. The small pro-legislation group and the larger group in favour of anti-regulation equally appeal to a homogeneous understanding of identity associated with a form of 'identity politics' that is relatively new in the country. Their concept of agency is not seen to derive from on-going negotiations of interests or norms that are transmutable. It is rather seen to be the self-evident expression of a fixed sense of belonging in a foundational social collective.

The epistemology of individualism that is shared by the competing positions of pro- and anti- regulation of hate speech is the effect of a reluctance to view the exclusionary practices of hate speech from the perspective of the victim. To assume the victim's position would entail a shift from an essentialized ontology of (sexual) identity to the public acknowledgment of ambiguity and contingency (assuming what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls a 'majoritizing' rather than a 'minoritizing' view of queerness and hate speech). The chapter therefore also

argues that discourses of homophobia lend themselves particularly persuasively to such a majoritizing strategy.

The History of LGBT(Q) Activism and Advocacy in Hungary

In this section I explore the community building that led to the emergence of LGBT(Q) activist politics in the 1990s in Hungary. The decade saw a period of assertive public activities marked by the registrations of the first LGBT(Q) organizations and the 1997 Budapest Pride March, the first to take place in the Central-East European region. The successful public presence of LGBT(Q) people's activism within a short span of time may function as the horizon of intelligibility that explains the emergence of anxious homophobic discourses in contemporary Hungary. LGBT(Q) collectives are still threatened by extreme violence in the 2000s, culminating in the attacks against the last three Pride Marches in 2007, 2008, and 2009.

The activist efforts of LGBT(Q) people advocating equal rights began with the registration of the civil organization *Homerosz – Lambda* in 1988, followed by two more organizations, *Háttér* (Support) and *Szivárvány* (Rainbow) (*Report* 2001: 15–26). The activists took immediate advantage of the 1989 Act of Association that promoted the registration of civil organizations with a minimum of ten people, provided their articles of association did not include explicit party political agendas. *Lambda* was set up with the aim of helping the social integration of homosexual people, facilitating community building and fighting AIDS. They launched the first and (as yet) only monthly LGBT(Q) magazine *Mások* ('Others') (<http://www.masok.hu>). And they were involved, alongside two other organizations, in the organization of the Budapest Pride March in 1997. The other two organizations were *Szivárvány Társulás a Melegek Jogaiért* (Rainbow Coalition for Gay Rights) and *Háttér: Baráti Társaság a Melegekért* (Support: Fraternal Society for Gays), founded in 1994 and 1995, respectively. *Support* has been running a free help line accessible from anywhere in the country, organizing workshops for its operators, and has been providing pro bono legal services through its Gay Legal Aid Service since May 2000.

Rainbow has a history of facing opposition. The Budapest City Court refused to register them on two accounts. First, it turned down the organization's self-chosen term 'meleg' ('warm') arguing that it is 'a word with positive connotation that may "mislead" people, especially the young' (*Report* 2001: 5). The other reason given by the Court concerned the organization's refusal to set the minimum age requirement for membership at 18. In the City Court's opinion that violates §199 of the Hungarian Penal Code. According to the paragraph, anybody over 18 having sexual relationship with a minor commits the crime of 'unnatural sodomy' which is punishable up to three years imprisonment. *Rainbow*

appealed against the decision, arguing that it poses a constitutional problem in that the rights of the child to minimum protection and care guaranteed by Article 67 conflict with the right of association guaranteed under Article 63(1). The High Court turned to the Constitutional Court that reinforced the City Court's decision saying that Hungarian courts have the right to uphold the minimum age requirement for membership of gay rights organizations. They argued that young people would be exposed to risks threatening 'the full development of their personality' (Constitutional Court Decision 1996) and that such a threat would outweigh the benefits of membership in such an organization. This 1996 Constitutional Court Decision can be seen as the legislative moment setting the terms of indirect homophobia in the debates on hate speech legislation ten years later.

The final important LGBT(Q) organization is *Habeas Corpus Munkacsaport* (Habeas Corpus Working Party). It was founded in 1996 by some activists who left *Support* because they disagreed with *Support's* identity-based politics and openly identified themselves as *queer*. Their major activities consist in petitioning on behalf of, and providing legal aid to, victims of violence. Potential victims are categorized on their home page as (1) children in the family, (2) women in relationships, (3) women or men facing various forms of disempowerment, such as sexual harassment in the workplace, denial of reproductive rights, prostitution, sexual violence, and (4) discrimination suffered by sexual minorities (<http://www.habeascorpus.hu>). The opposition to a range of types of violence included in the manifesto opens up the possibility for multiple alignments of selfhood and desire. It mobilizes people to a solidarity that is not based on static identities defined by sexual orientation (often felt to be the 'obvious' or only reason why people would become involved in activism). Although this is a marginal voice, I want to acknowledge its critical potential, hence my use of the letter 'Q' in parenthesis in the acronym LGBT(Q).

The Hate Speech Debate

Running parallel to these developments in LGBT(Q) activism has been a heated debate about the regulation of hate speech. On 25 May 2004 the Constitutional Court struck down a new statute regulating hate speech that had passed by the Parliament in December 2003 (Constitutional Court Decision 2004). The Court's decision was made at the request of the President of the Republic, exercising his constitutional right to seek a prior review of the Act before its promulgation. The President's repeated petitions led to the rejection of a series of attempts to regulate hate speech. There had been two other failed attempts at regulating hate speech in 1992 and 1999, both annulled eventually by the Constitutional Court's decision. The last decision in 2004 positions the

President of the Republic as the ultimate agent preventing the Act from taking effect, since he originally served as the first President of the Constitutional Court from its formation in November 1989 to 1998, setting the terms of the subsequent decisions. The actual debate I will discuss took place over some 14 months in the weekly periodical *Élet és Irodalom* ('Life and Literature'; *ÉS* henceforth) in 2004 and 2005, following the decision of the Constitutional Court. The periodical is seen as an elite weekly that earned a reputation as the forum for the liberal-minded critical intellectuals in the country under state socialism, and has maintained it after the system change. The participants in the debate published their contributions in the weekly's column called *Agora*. As the name implies, the editorial board intend the column to function as a public space available to contributions by prominent intellectuals in response to current, predominantly party political, struggles. As such it is an ideal public site for debating the Court's decision. The debate in the periodical is primarily framed as a legislative matter, although it could also be read as the mitigated expression of self-reflexivity, revisiting the political strategies of the groups involved in the struggle. The participants in both the pro- and anti-regulation groups debate whether it is possible to draw the boundary between freedom of speech (as an important, recently acquired right that should be protected at any cost) and cases of incitement to racial hatred through public speech that could threaten the new social order. Further, they pose the question of where one should draw the line if it is considered possible to separate these issues. The pro-regulation group would contend that it is possible to define cases of clear and present danger and thereby draw a distinction between mere opinion and speech that counts as action, in so far as it is capable of publicly insulting the dignity of another person or group. Any linguistic expression that publicly insults the dignity of the other risks inciting indicatively racial hatred and should, therefore, be seen as a case of criminal misdemeanour that is rightly punishable (by up to three years of imprisonment). The majority voice advocates an absolutist position against any form of sanctioning, in the name of 'freedom of speech', arguing that hate speech is an expression of opinion that is worthy of contempt but not an actual instance of deeds. Consequently they agree with, and welcome, the Constitutional Court's decision. What is important to underscore about the debate is the fact that both groups draw on the speech-versus-conduct divide. According to the pro-group, some cases of public speech should in fact be judged as *immediate action because of their material effect*, and therefore as a linguistically performed act of violence, while other utterances are mere instances of language use, giving non-effective accounts of the speaker's mind. By contrast, the anti legislation group insists that all instances of speech are expressions of opinion only.

I take issue with the exclusionary categorization the two positions have in common and seek to expose the fact that their fight is not really about

articulating a different kind of logic, but about *where* to draw the conduct/speech boundary. Unlike them, I am going to analyse the logic of argumentation of the two major positions from the perspective of the victim and, in so doing, acknowledge the different effects of hate speech among particular groups of victims. Viewed from the victim's position one can develop a subversive position that goes beyond the divide between '(criminal) conduct therefore legitimate object for the legislator to sanction' versus 'expression of opinion therefore legitimate object for the legislator to protect'. That may help to articulate a dialectic relationship between language use and action as captured by James Paul Gee's concept of 'discourse-in-action' (1999: 17). The concept outlines the intertwined relationship between discourses (acts of signifying) and the social institutions they are embedded in. To be recognizable as a particular type of person engaged in doing a particular type of activity, argues Gee, one must enact a discourse (and thereby maintain it over time) in a way that is similar enough to other institutionalized performances to be recognizable by a given collective (Gee 1999: 18). Consequently, to be socially intelligible means to be *sufficiently* 'in' discourse. This dialectic in my reading entails the assumption that all statements are products of some interaction between language use (discursive action) and social institution (non-discursive action), undermining the speech-versus-conduct divide. More importantly, the dialectic conceptualization of recognizability as a matter of differentiation *relative to* the institutionalized context also allows me to grasp the differences across practices of injury as a matter of different degrees of the salience of discursive practices in and for particular forms of institutionalized recognition. Some meanings of stigmatization in contemporary Hungary invite the legitimization of social exclusion by setting up a more 'obvious' dividing line between action and language use (seen as non-action). For example, the identity of the 'gypsy' or the 'Jew' is seen as a matter of static being and hence impermeable by language use. With other identities, such as the 'buzi' (closest to the English term 'faggot') the distinction between action and opinion is less visible. These can therefore serve as a more convincing case to challenge the binary because here, ironically, the salience of language use for producing 'the proper object' of hateful attack is much more prominent.

This appears similar to the point about the unequal structuration of the epistemological spaces made by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990: 67–90) when comparing the effects and power potential of the Biblical story of Esther's avowal as Jewish with that of contemporary sexual coming out, which she imagines in the context of jurisprudence. She argues that the fact that Esther discloses herself to her husband shows, among other things, that her 'Jewish choice of minority politics [is] based on a conservative reinscription of gender roles' (Sedgwick 1990: 82). Such a choice is not applicable in the case of marginalized sexualities, due to their exclusion from the social institution

of marriage. This differential distribution of institutional entitlements underscores the discursive aspect of institutionalized differences between the two forms of stigmatization.

Sedgwick also argues that the specificity of sexual marginalization ‘stems at least partly from the plurality and the cumulative incoherence of modern ways of conceptualizing same-sex desire and, hence, gay identity; an incoherence that answers, too, to the incoherence with which *heterosexual* desire and identity are conceptualized’ (Sedgwick 1990: 82).¹ In other words, Sedgwick’s concern about the unequal distribution of discursive intelligibility and its effects for the success of minority politics supports my objective to critique the strategic focalization of anti-Semitism in the Hungarian debate as ‘the’ intelligible and self-evident example of *all* forms of hate-speech and my parallel objective to mobilize the subversive potential of the discursive incoherence and non-sufficient intelligibility of marginal sexualities relative to other forms of marginalization.

Selectivity and Exclusion

Significantly, both those in favour of legislating against hate speech and those against it support their arguments with reference to the similar debate in the USA throughout the 1990s, which was triggered mostly, but not exclusively, by a dramatic increase in instances of racism on university campuses (Matsuda 1993; Walker 1994). Hungarian participants on both sides tend to reduce their representation of the US debates and court cases to an arguably irreconcilable division between those defending free speech under the First Amendment, and those defending equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment of the US Constitution. The two Amendment categories function as the implied equivalent of two new Articles in the Hungarian Constitution included as part of the democratization process in 1989. They are Article 61 that defines freedom of expression and freedom of the press as fundamental rights and 70/A that defends equal treatment for anyone regardless their racial, ethnic or gender identity, as well as their political or religious opinion. The dichotomous representation of the US Constitution reveals the dangerous effects of naturalizing the right to free speech and the parallel preclusion of any systematic consideration of the differential injurious effects of hate speech. The dichotomy constructs ‘free speech’ as a universal right available for everyone and, as such, as an already given linguistic precondition of citizenship; the profound marker of the new

1 The incoherence of heterosexual desire is almost completely ignored in the Hungarian public discourses of sexual politics, underscoring Sedgwick’s point about the contingent embeddedness of marginalized sexuality (Adamik 2000; Fodor 2002).

democratic regime. My point is that the unconditioned defence of free speech is logically made possible by the ‘naturalization’ of the alleged availability of free speech for all. According to the propositional assumption of the statement, it does not make sense to defend something that is not possessed already. The fallacy of the assumption can conveniently silence not only any attempt at exploring the denial of the speech act of coming-out for non-normative sexualities in most public domains of life but, more importantly, it can also conflate the coming-out of the stigmatized with the normalizing acts of ‘outing’ by the stigmatizer. Thus, in spite of the unequivocal declaration by all participants that they disagree with the practice of hate-speech in general, their selectivity does the ideological work of reinforcing the linguistically articulated injuries, albeit in importantly different ways.

It is striking too that no participant in the debate, even among those advocating the minority position in favour of hate-speech legislation, refers the reader for a relevant parallel to other social and legal contexts, such as the German or Austrian laws that introduced legal sanctions against anti-Semitism. The systematic blindness towards Europe evident in this rhetoric is more problematic in the case of the pro-legislative group. As the argumentation by the pro-legislative group hinges on the prevalence of socio-historical legacies of racial hatred, a critical discussion of the European examples could be more effectively used in support of the pro-group’s point about the non-categorical enactment of the law in the relevant cases of US jurisprudence:

In terms of the outcome, it is really true that our constitutional rules equally protect the Ku-Klux-Klan and the social liberation movements’ right to the freedom of speech. *However, this right is neither categorical nor static.* ... At the moment in 14 states and in the District of Columbia it is forbidden to burn the cross; all judges in the Supreme Court agree unequivocally that – *in the light of our country’s history* –, it is ‘a symbolic act of hate’. (Rehnquist 2004)

If the pro-group explicitly acknowledged the importance of relativity in terms of geopolitical contexts they could more easily expose the importance of framing in the debate and discuss ‘substance’ as a consequence of historically and politically contingent positions between the various US states and, by extension, that of Hungary. The pro-group could successfully start challenging the essentializing move that they critique in the anti-regulation group’s position but refuse to acknowledge in their own. Furthermore, the recognition of the shaping force of the social and political contexts could more easily invite criticism of existing European practices as well.

I believe neither group can (yet) acknowledge historical and political contingency for fear of weakening the grounds of their appeal to an arguably neutral legislative power, seen as the ultimate (and sometimes only) guardian

of the new social order 'outside of' the biases of party politics. They are both caught within an absolutist horizon of intelligibility, attributing a sovereign power to speech. As Butler (1997: 77) argues about this kind of discursive logic, 'The inflated and efficacious utterance attributed to hate speech ... is itself modelled on the speech of a sovereign state, understood as a sovereign speech act with the power to do what it says'. The difference between the two groups therefore does not lie in their perception of legal discourse as endowed with absolute power but in the reversal of the values associated with the 'identity' of the speaker. In the view of the pro-legislative group it is the assaultive citizen's speech that seeks, illegitimately, to wield the power of (sovereign) speech, while the anti-legislation group accuses their activist opponents of threatening the power of the new democratic State by contesting the 'neutrality' of the speech of legislation.

Moreover, the exclusive choice of racism from the US debate as the 'equivalent' of anti-Semitism in Hungary is also selective in that it results in the silencing of the themes of homophobia and sexism, which were addressed equally in the US debates. I would argue that the systematic silencing of homophobia, even by the pro-legislation group, can be viewed as another symptom of a fear of marginalization. The bracketing of difference, in tandem with the drive to accentuate the commonality across the different forms of hate-speech, is motivated by the same (strategic) understanding. There is a perceived danger that foregrounding the particularity of homophobia might result in the acknowledgement of the relatively more salient role of language use in the enactment of the disparaging offence. Homophobia involves a particularly salient use of language, in that members of the group discriminated against must define themselves linguistically by 'coming out'. This differentiates homophobia from, for example, racism, where the marginalized difference is visibly inscribed by skin colour. The pro-legislation group wishes to disavow that fact. Hence the subversive potential of the victim's position is (counter-effectively) sidelined in the name of strengthening the new democratic regime. The best the pro-group may hope to achieve in this way is to preserve the dignity of all human beings by insisting with less tenacity on the dignity of some particular groups that are perceived as marginal. I would argue that this hierarchical differentiation across the various forms of hate speech is reinscribed in the 'internal' distinction used to categorize a particular instance of hate speech. According to Michael Billig (1995: 6), contemporary perceptions of nationalism rest on a problematic distinction. There are 'hot' and harmful forms of nationalism and there are 'banal' statements of national belonging. The 'hot' ones are seen to result in immediate conduct. They are said to be capable of stirring up such intense emotions in the majority of the citizenry that they lead to the 'active disturbance' of the social order, while 'banal' statements are seen as benign, as matter of routinely voiced opinion only.

Following Billig, I shall adapt his concerns about discourses of nationalism to heteronormativity while arguing that banal statements are not benign at all but ‘the endemic condition’ (1995: 6) of heterosexist ideology delivering the reassuring sense of (sexual) normality.

The Victim’s Story and the Perspective of Non-normative Sexualities

Why is there a systematic resistance to the consideration of the victim’s story even in the argumentation of those in defence of regulation? Mari Matsuda (1993), the critical race theorist, provides an insightful answer in her study that was born out of the 1990s US debate. She argues that we need to try to assume the perspective of the victim because it can unsettle the neat binary of vulnerable and non-vulnerable people and reveal the effects of hate speech on members of the so-called non-target group as well. The apparently non-target groups are also to suffer the consequences of hate-speech because ‘liberty interests of whites are [also] curtailed in *an atmosphere rife with racial hatred*’, argues Matsuda (1993: 23 [own italics]). That is, she proposes a systematic use of the law against hate speech by pointing out that violent language is not accidental or inconsequential but *structural* in nature, and so the anxiety about living ‘in the shadow’ of the implied figure of the Other (such as the ‘fag’), threatening ‘us’ should be tackled in an equally systematic manner. I would argue that Matsuda’s position can be extended to include any particular form of hate speech. In actual fact, to contend that hate-speech is structural should mean precisely that there is an order of discourse of hate-speech, a discursive field of various practices of exclusion that is delivered primarily through the denial of access to speaking to power, the denial of linguistic citizenship. Such strategies prevent the immediately targeted group from participation and recognition on equal footing, rendering them second-class citizens while granting some alleged security against the ‘our’ anxiety.

I am not arguing, though, that the various forms of hate-speech are of equal relevance and force for the constitution of this order of discourse, nor should we inevitably suppose that they are. I argue for the systematic inclusion of homophobia precisely for its higher level of symbolic saturation in comparison with the other forms of hate speech. It is much more directly a struggle that has language use itself at its stake. The practice of signification in the act of homophobia is more integral and hence visible for the effective denial of participation than in the case of racist slurs. It is a fight over access to speech free of intimidation and threat where coming-out is not to function as the precondition for exclusionary labelling and could not be rewritten as an act of being outed by the majority norm. Hence, starting our analysis of hate speech with homophobia may more easily expose the ideological investments of the

distinction between '(benign) opinion' versus '(harmful) conduct' that the alleged universal availability of free-speech is supposed to hide.

The debate can be seen as an act of serious contestation between the participants regarding the categorization of the event itself. The minority group in favour of legislation propose that hate speech be regulated by the criminal code as an act of dangerous conduct when it calls for violent action against particular groups of people. This would extend the existing civil code regulations whereby hate-speech is categorized as an offence of *individual defamation* and as such a legitimate matter for private litigation. This move would in effect result in the reformulation of the 1978 Act in criminal law that recognizes only the particular form of language use categorized as *instigation* against the state as a case for legal jurisdiction, because here speech is seen not only as opinion but as effective in that it has persuaded another to take violent action. The crucial point in the Hungarian debate in terms of the legislative frame seems to be concerned with the divide between public sanction versus private litigation that corresponds to the equivalent distinction between 'hot' action and 'banal' opinion. Against this struggle over how to redraw the boundaries, I would point out that Matsuda provides cogent reasons for the introduction and enforcement of state sanctions against hate speech instead of civil, private and personal resistance. She argues in favour of legal recognition of the pervasive vulnerability of the collectives of degraded people, whereby assaultive speech is condoned by active dissemination of racist propaganda. Her major argument is formulated from the perspective of the victim and insists that 'the tolerance of hate speech is not borne by the community at large ... but *by those least able to pay [the tax of silencing imposed on them]*' (1993: 18 [own italics]).

However, this argument does not address the relationship between language and 'reality' that seems to be ultimately at stake. I would like to add a further dimension to Matsuda's position that regards the logic of categorization in the legislative discourse itself. As long as hate speech is categorized as belonging within civil (i.e. private), non-criminal (i.e. non-state) law, the hierarchical logic of the binary distinction will always position it as secondary, as a case of less relevance for the legislator. Formal and administrative sanctions under criminal law aim at redressing *social* injustice, while the civil code comprises *private* prosecution on an individual level. Furthermore, when the participants re-frame the debate as a matter of language use, the legislative categorization comes to be implicated within another dichotomy: that of opinion only versus facts, i.e. mere words against actual forms of behaviour. Yet, this heated debate over re-categorization does not cut across the criminal/civil law distinction itself.

I would argue that the rhetoric of argumentation on both sides draws on a contingent chain of hierarchical differentiations that is informed by an exclusionary logic. Its working is explained succinctly by Susan Gal and Gail

Kligman (2000). Discussing the politics of gendering after the collapse of state socialism, they propose that the re-production of gendered relations is carried out via a discursive distinction that builds on dichotomies of spaces that are naturally associated with the meaning of ‘public’ and ‘private’. The dichotomies are:

recursively applicable – like self-similar fractal patterns in geometry – and therefore *can be nested*. ... The result is that within any public [domain] one can always create a private; within any private [domain] one can create a public. Which level of contrast and context is invoked in any instance of use is a matter of positioning and of the perspective of social actors and institutions. (2000: 41)

The dominant practice of categorization in the Hungarian hate speech debate is shaped by a similar recursively applicable fractal arrangement of the action versus speech dichotomy. However, as I have argued elsewhere (Barát 2008), Gal and Kligman do not consider that at a given moment there are *multiple* chains of fractal binaries intertwined with one another and that these multiple chains may not be equally intertwined with the non-symbolic elements of the particular practices. Disregarding the accumulation of binaries may, in Matsuda’s words (1993: 23), miss the *systemic, structural nature* of this fractal logic of categorization.

The arguments about whether and how hate speech should be regulated in Hungary also revolve around the issues of whether, and in what cases, hate speech can be seen as violent conduct rather than a linguistically-contained opinion *about* something ‘in’ society. The diverse lines of argumentation, I argue, are pulled together to create the illusion of a coherent system through the principle of fractal categorization. The absolutist position in defence of free speech can easily disregard the ‘content’ of language, and draw on *the dichotomy* of deeds versus words, reapplying the same principle of categorization and dividing the latter into content (meaning) versus style (linguistic form), presuming that the hierarchical levels of distinction, as well as their constituent elements, are in a linear, one-way, cause-and-effect relationship. In other words, hate speech cannot be addressed as a form of conduct but as a *derivative* linguistic representation of the ‘state of the world’, subject to change if and only if the ‘world itself’ is transformed ‘first’. Consequently, taking the logic to its extreme, instances of hate speech are explicitly categorized by participants in the anti-legislation group as mere expressions of ‘*bad taste*’ (sic) (Tamás 2004) and, as matters of aesthetic judgments pertaining to individuals, those expressions should fall outside matters of social structures and justice:

Yet, even the most blunt and rude style is not (per definitionem) ‘hate speech’. It is only rude and hurting. [...] ‘Hate speech’ therefore is not concerned with the modality of the speech or its ‘tone’ but with certain contents. ‘Hate speech’ is speech pronounced against minorities and aliens (in some sense of the word) and it does not need to be hot or rude. (Tamás 2004)

As the above excerpt shows, the pro-legislation group cannot win their argument precisely because their position is informed by the same exclusionary categorization practice. They do not question the representation-versus-conduct divide but would simply like to expand the scope of the category of ‘conduct’ and include certain cases of hate-speech as an instance of instigation and, as in the case of ‘hot’ speech, conflate it with actual conduct – on the grounds of the victim’s allegedly static membership in the particular collective, serving as the ‘contents’ of the speech.

In opposition to the absolutist position, while inviting the pro-group to shift their perspective, I ground my advocacy of legislating against hate speech as part of the Hungarian criminal code in a position that does not presuppose a necessary binary hierarchical distinction between ‘(all of) us’ and a ‘them’ associated with threats to the political system. In terms of the politics of an inclusionary categorization, I would go along with Nancy Fraser’s (1997) critical theory of recognition. Fraser tries to move beyond the ‘identity politics of equity’ versus the ‘cultural politics of difference’ debate in feminist scholarship and notes that social justice is concerned with *both* matters of equity, i.e. redistribution, as well as those of difference, i.e. recognition of status:

To be misrecognized, [accordingly], is not simply to be thought ill of, looked down upon or devalued in others’ attitudes, beliefs or representations. It is rather to be denied the status of *a full partner* [i.e. citizen] in social *interaction*, as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem. (1997: 12 [own italics])

Drawing on Fraser’s position that sees *misrecognition as status subordination*, we can start to elaborate a model that conceptualizes hate speech not only as merely cultural harm of ‘pure’ misrecognition, an act of accidental opinion, but as the enactment of some *institutionalized patterns of cultural values* (heteropatriarchy). By identifying with the effects of hate speech on the immediate target of marginalized sexualities, we can wield the power of going public and forge an alliance between ‘those’ lesbians, gays, bisexuals and – only recently in the Hungarian context – trans* people, and *anyone* who refuses the privilege of the heterosexual matrix, including the escape route to the hegemonic logic of tolerance.

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Chapter 7

Queer in Ireland: 'Deviant' Filiation and the (Un)holy Family

Anne Mulhall

The Republic of Ireland has experienced momentous change during the last 15 years.¹ A peripheral postcolonial nation, with a struggling economy kept afloat in part by successive generations of mass emigration and stereotyped as rural, traditional, Catholic, socially stagnant and unprogressive, the Republic has experienced an unprecedented period of transformation, becoming, from the mid-1990s until the recent recession, the 'poster child' of 'Western' neoliberalism. The process has been accompanied, not accidentally, by a liberalization of legislation pertaining to same-sex relationships and a tightening of controls on immigration. This essay seeks to explore the points of intersection and conflict between the liminally positioned queer and the racialized immigrant other in the construction of the biopolitical state, particularly in relation to the reconstitution of the ideal postnationalist Irish family.

Mass emigration has been a key indicator of Ireland's historically peripheral positioning and is inextricable from the legacy of colonization. From 1801 to 1921 roughly eight million people emigrated, with the Great Famine (1845–49) embedding emigration as a survival strategy (Hickman 2005: 117). Emigration remained constant up until the mid-1990s, and was particularly heavy during the 1950s and late 1980s – decades marked by economic recession and mass unemployment. However, the Republic experienced substantial economic growth in the mid-1990s, a rapid increase in employment, and a similarly rapid increase in immigration as the need for workers to fuel the economy grew.

1 This chapter focuses on the Republic of Ireland. For recent engagements with Queer in Northern Ireland, see Backus, M. 2009. 'Things that have the potential to go terribly wrong: Homosexuality, paedophilia and the Kincora boys' home scandal', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Queer Theory*, edited by N. Giffney and M. O' Rourke. Farnham: Ashgate, 237–57. And in the same publication Conrad, K. 2009. 'Nothing to hide ... nothing to fear: Discriminatory surveillance and queer visibility in Great Britain and Northern Ireland', 329–47.

From the 3.63 million recorded for the 1996 Census, the population has grown to 4.46 million as of April 2009 (CSO 2009: 1). The 2006 Census recorded 420,000 non-Irish nationals, or almost 10 per cent of the 2006 population, from 188 countries living in Ireland (CSO 2008: 6). Immigration peaked in 2007, with 109,500 people arriving to the state (CSO 2009: 2). The swift and brutal impact of recession has had an immediate effect on migration patterns. From its 2007 peak, immigration fell to 57,300 in 2009, while emigration rose by 40 per cent to 65,100 (CSO 2009: 1). Emigration levels are set to rise significantly this year as unemployment levels continue to climb beyond the current rate of 14 per cent.

This radical transformation has been central to the reconfiguration of the Republic of Ireland as a normative EU member state. Veerendra Lele (2008: 10) notes that '[l]ower fertility and higher immigration serve as sensitive cultural indices of European modernity', and argues that this 'demographic modernity' is a key marker of Ireland's transition to EU normativity. It marks the radical recalibration of the Republic's ideological infrastructure attendant on becoming European; it repositions Ireland at the postnational centre rather than the postcolonial periphery; it assures, as Harrington observes, that 'Irishness will at last be attached to the positive pole of a racialized European identity' (2005: 427). The instruments of population management that have been deployed by the state in response to immigration bring it firmly in line with EU normativity. Whereas the *jus solis* principle had been the presumptive grounds of citizenship since the foundation of the state, entered into statutory law by the 1956 Citizenship and Nationality Act, the 2004 Citizenship Referendum – passed by a majority of 79.8 per cent – sought to restrict citizenship to descent, or the *jus sanguinis* principle. As citizenship by descent is, in general, the norm within the EU member states, it was argued that the amendment would make the Republic more European, bringing it into line with that racialized European norm (Harrington 2005: 446, Lele 2010: 10–11).

One impetus for the passage of the 2004 referendum was the allegation by Michael McDowell, the then Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, that the Dublin maternity hospitals were being stretched to breaking point by 'floods' of non-EU national women in late pregnancy arriving into the state's maternity wards in order to exploit the vulnerability of Irish citizenship law. No precise statistics were supplied to corroborate these allegations, but the Irish Refugee Council has estimated that 1 per cent per annum of all children born in Ireland between 2002 and 2006 were born to non-nationals – approximately 600 children per year (Lele 2008: 9–10). The wholly fictitious scenario of a vulnerable state under siege from exploitative foreign invaders effectively coded certain women and their children as undesirable on grounds of their national origin and ethnic identifications. The Citizenship Referendum was not just about migration, then, but about race, racism, and the maintenance

of the whiteness of the Irish state through what Ronit Lentin identifies as ‘racial management’ (2007: 621). Several commentators have understood the transition of the Republic from racial to racist state in terms of Foucault’s analysis of biopower and governmentality (Harrington 2005; Lele 2008; Lentin 2005, 2007; Lentin and McVeigh 2006). For Lentin, the Republic is a racist state ‘using racializing governmental technologies in an attempt to maintain its homogeneity by ‘managing’ ethnic diversity, and to control, in particular ... migrant and minority ethnic populations’ (2007: 614). The 2004 referendum revealed the intersectionality of race and gender in displacing anxieties about the future of the nation-state onto ‘gendered (black) bodies’ (Lentin 2005: 2).

The racially marked woman as producer of an undesirable future who must therefore be managed by expulsion if necessary is the biopolitical complement to the ethnically desirable, presumptively white, woman who is, on the other hand, legislatively coerced into reproducing the nation’s aspirational future. Commentators have often remarked on the ideological connection between the virulent abortion debates during the 1980s and early 1990s and the propaganda unleashed against the racially marked reproductive immigrant woman in 2004 (Harrington 2005, Lentin 2005, 2007, Lentin and McVeigh 2006). One way of understanding this connection is provided by Lauren Berlant’s delineation of ‘fetal citizenship’ (Berlant 1997: 83–144). Kathryn Conrad draws on Berlant’s work to tease out the logic of the iconic fetus that surfaced in the Republic during the abortion referenda of the 1980s and 1990s. The 1992 abortion referendum on the right to information and the right to travel was fought out on the eve of the Maastricht treaty, and the two campaigns informed each other. Thus, according to Conrad, the iconic fetus became a figure for Irish sovereignty. She writes (2004: 78):

The fantasy of the fetus as an uncorrupted and autonomous entity in Irish nationalist anti-abortion discourse is also a fantasy of the security and autonomy of Ireland. As goes the fetus, so goes the nation; all the hopes of the latter are pinned on the purity and security of the former entity.

In both cases, the state positions women’s bodies as instrumental to the management of population, with the woman’s body rendered as a porous, unstable border, or as a ‘foreign agent’ betraying the integrity of the nation. In ‘pro-life’ rhetoric, the fetus figures the sovereign nation-state that must be kept pure from external European legislative pollution; on the other hand, in the case of contemporary racial management, the fetus is itself the potential pollutant, and legislative exclusion of the undesirable future that it portends joins the Republic to normative EU governmentality.

As Conrad has found, as elsewhere, so in Ireland the homosexual has also been seen as a contaminant, a foreign agent polluting the national body. This is

again for Conrad a manifestation of the border politics of the nation-state: as a threat to the hetero-reproductive imperative of the fetal nation, the homosexual ‘reveals a profound anxiety not only about sexual identity but also about the stability of the nation-state and the security of its borders’ (Conrad 2004: 22). Such anxieties are given concrete expression in legal proscriptions, of course. The Free State had incorporated British common and statute law, so that the 1861 Offences Against the Persons Act and the 1885 Labouchere Amendment remained unchanged within Irish law until their eventual repeal in 1993. The Irish Gay Rights Movement was established in 1974, in the wake of Stonewall and the emergence of the Gay Liberation Front in New York in 1969 and London in 1970 (Rose 1995: 73). The movement subsequently split into the National Gay Federation and the Campaign for Homosexual Law Reform (Ferriter 2009: 491). The focus on gay male issues is evident in the titles of these foundational organizations; Izzy Kamikaze (1995: 118) recounts the resistance to the inclusion of women in the most visible queer organizations, noting the inclusion of ‘lesbian’ in the NGF – which thus became the NLGF – as late as 1990. Equally, the laws that needed reforming applied exclusively to homosexual men. This had the advantage of placing women outside the remit of the law, but at the same time contributed to the occlusion of queer women’s existence within the early gay rights movement and the broader society (Conrad 2004: 54–5). Many lesbian women were, of course, centrally involved in the Irish feminist movement that achieved massive gains during the 1970s, and while there were conflicts between different factions, groups such as Irish Women United included a vocal radical lesbian feminist membership (Connolly and O’Toole 2005).

The path to decriminalization was long, and both the legal instruments that were used and the way in which Irish legal rulings were framed during that struggle are instructive with regard to the ongoing push-pull between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ in the Irish context, and between indigenous social movements and external social and judicial forces. In 1974, David Norris and his colleagues in the Campaign for Homosexual Law Reform resolved on an action against the State on the grounds that the existing laws infringed his constitutional rights to privacy and to equal treatment before the law. The case was eventually heard in the High Court in 1980, and on appeal in the Supreme Court in 1983. In both cases, the action was dismissed. Norris then took his case to the European Court of Human Rights, which found in 1988 that, as had been the case with Jeffrey Dudgeon’s case in relation to the law in Northern Ireland, Norris’s right to privacy had been infringed, and that the Irish law would have to be reformed. It took the Irish government five years to act on the ECHR directive (Bourke et al. 2002: 321). Once the judgement had been won in Europe, the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) was formed to agitate for the desired implementation, and it remains today the most influential mainstream political gay and lesbian organization in the Republic. Following a change of government

in 1992 and intense and relentless lobbying by GLEN, decriminalization was eventually achieved under the 1993 Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, with equal age of consent (17) and no military exemption (Robson 1995). GLEN was also, with many other interest groups, lobbying for reformed equality legislation. This combined effort eventually resulted in two acts: the Employment Equality Act (1998) and the Equal Status Act (2000), along with the establishment of the Equality Authority in 1999 to ‘enforce’ this legislation (Cronin 2004: 252).

Opposition to decriminalization was framed within a rhetoric of family protection which took as given that Irishness was constitutively heterosexual and Catholic. The distinctiveness of the Irish nation lay in its moral exceptionalism. So, for instance, Chief Justice O’Higgins asserted in the 1983 ruling that ‘the Christian nature of our State’ militated against any tolerance of homosexuality, which he described as ‘damaging to the health both of individuals and the public and ... potentially harmful to the institution of marriage’ (Conrad 2004: 48–9). For Family Solidarity, the most vocal of the anti-decriminalization lobby, the Strasbourg directive was more evidence of the corruption of Irish moral sovereignty by external forces in league with the internal enemy, ‘another example of Europe imposing its ethical values on Ireland’ (Conrad 2004: 52). Such formulations imagine Catholic morality as the defining core of the Irish nation, so that any breaches of that moral code entail a diminution of the nation’s sovereignty.

Many key voices within the queer movement in Ireland in the early 1990s sought to counter this positioning of homosexuality as intrinsically anti-Irish. In his speech to the Seanad upon the passage of the new bill into law in 1993, Norris described it as ‘wiping the lingering shame of British imperial statute from the record of Irish law’, insisting that the Irish people were a ‘generous, tolerant, compassionate and decent people’ whose true nature was now reflected in a truly Irish law that dispelled the colonial spectre from this aspect of Irish life (Conrad 2004: 52). In a comparable move, Kieran Rose, a key figure in the Irish gay and lesbian movement, sought to counter a simplistic and imperializing model that frames social liberalization and legal reform as the consequence of importations from ‘metropolitan centres’ (1995: 73). His analysis positions the Irish movement in the context of the postcolonial nation and continuing nationalist struggles in Northern Ireland, resisting the binary between the modern, liberalizing, progressive metropolitan centre and the backward, regressive, atavistic periphery that perpetuates a colonial epistemology within global queer interrelations. He states:

A core element of our strategy was a rejection of the once prevalent notion that Irish society was inherently reactionary on socio-sexual issues and that progressive change would only happen under the influence of external forces such as the European Union. For us, real and positive traditional values arose

from the struggle against colonialism and for our civil, religious and economic rights (Rose 1995: 74).

However, during the ‘Celtic Tiger’ years that have since intervened, this position has altered dramatically. Michael G. Cronin has demonstrated the kind of work that the queer has been made to perform in the context of neoliberal Ireland. He shows how the queer has been made to signify modernity and progress, so that the legislative gains and increasing toleration of the gay and lesbian community represent Ireland to itself as a ‘tolerant, progressive, and modern society’ (Cronin 2004: 251). Cronin situates GLEN within the State’s liberalizing self-image, asserting that GLEN has ‘followed the dominant model for lesbian and gay activism in the liberal democracies of the industrialized world’, adopting a mainstreaming, reformist, liberalizing approach that seeks assimilation within existing social and economic structures rather than any whole-scale radical reconstitution of those structures themselves (Cronin 2004: 252).

Significant advances have been made in several areas of LGBTIQ concern in recent times. June 2010 saw Lydia Foy win her case in the ECHR for legal recognition of transgender people in the Republic. There is increased public awareness of homophobic discrimination in the overwhelmingly Catholic-run state school system, thanks largely to the work of the LGBT youth advocacy group *BelongTo*. However, as has been the case in the United States and in other European countries, same-sex marriage has dominated the political agenda. In 2004, Katherine Gilligan and Ann Louise Zappone began their action against the government, seeking legal recognition of their Canadian marriage. The High Court ruled against them in 2006. The ‘KAL’ case gave rise to *Marriage Equality*, an organization that is campaigning heavily for full marriage equality, as is another organization, *LGBT Noise*. GLEN have been centrally involved in the introduction of the Civil Partnership Bill to the Oireachtas. Their qualified endorsement of the Bill, as a step toward full equality has drawn substantial criticism due to the ‘two-tier’ system the Bill sanctions. For both those who oppose and those who advocate same-sex marriage in Ireland, the rights of the child have become the decisive terrain for articulating their respective arguments. The Civil Partnership Bill is largely silent with regard to children of same-sex parents, while the relationship between the child and the same-sex social or non-biological parent is nowhere recognized in Irish law. Up until 1987, the child of unmarried parents was deemed illegitimate in Irish law and had no rights of inheritance or maintenance, and the position of the child of a non-biological same-sex parent is consigned to a similar zone of erasure. Although the Civil Partnership Bill does not materially change the present position of this child, that such a major piece of legislation deliberately disregards the rights, not to say existence, of such children gives a definitive legislative weight to this illegitimacy in its insistent silence (Barrington 2009: 11, 24, 26, 28–9).

Opponents of the Bill likewise focus on the rights of the child. The Iona Institute, an influential Catholic ‘think-tank’ established in 2006 to ‘promote marriage and the family’, is representative of this opposition, maintaining that same-sex marriage denies ‘the right of children, where possible, to be raised by a mother and father ... we must choose between the rights of the adults and the rights of the child’ (Iona Institute 2007: 2). For such groups, the children of same-sex parents are merely collateral damage inevitably sustained in protecting the hetero-reproduction of the nation through the preservation of an abstract, iconic child-figure. Some children must suffer the ignominy of non-recognition, it seems, so that this increasingly notional ideal might be perpetuated.

Similar issues arise as have arisen elsewhere in relation to the political and normative implications of the focus on same-sex marriage as the *sine qua non* of social justice for LGBTIQ people. In what ways does same-sex marriage challenge or re-entrench zones of legitimacy and illegitimacy? Is the desire for legal recognition inescapably assimilative, or is there any transgressive, transformative potential in the ‘queering’ of the heteronormative space of marriage and the marital family? What happens to those excluded from the charmed circle of marital and familial legitimacy? Does the emphasis on marriage as one gold standard of full participatory citizenship assign these others to an at best symbolic non-place of quasi-citizenship? Legitimation for some inevitably entails delegitimation for others: this is how legitimation retains its power and sustains the desire of the subject for its sanctifying recognition. As Butler observes, ‘the sphere of legitimate intimate alliance is established through producing and intensifying regions of illegitimacy’ (2002: 17). While those thus legitimated acquire positive recognition and legibility, those ‘that fall outside the purview of the sanctifying law become illegible or, worse, untenable’ (Butler 2002: 18). This is where queer rejoins immigration. In the context of marriage, the non-married and those whose marital forms and families are not accorded the same inclusionary benevolence on grounds of national origin, religion, residency, racial, and/or class status, are rendered ever more unentitled as other couplings of various kinds are folded into the life bestowed by the nation-state, with all the entitlements and privileges that such life brings. The dangers of such re-entrenchments of the family as the bedrock of society are illustrated by journalist Kate Holmquist’s framing of Marriage Equality’s campaign ‘We Are Family’. She argues: ‘Family in whatever form it takes is what holds us together and what holds society together. ... binding your life to another person’s ... [is] practically committing a revolutionary act in today’s culture of selfish individualism’ (2010: 17). While the need for the legal recognition and social legibility that marriage equality brings to (some) queer people is not in question, Holmquist’s subsumption of the queer family within the normative national family undoubtedly intensifies ‘regions of illegitimacy’.

Such exclusionary reinforcements are particularly fraught in the zone where queer citizen and racialized non-citizen meet. In 2005, in the context of intense lobbying for the Civil Partnership Bill, the organizers of the Dublin Lesbian and Gay Film Festival invited the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform to open this important event in the Irish queer calendar. This decision was controversial, to say the least, notably because of the regressive and discriminatory changes to equality, social welfare and, in particular, immigration law, including the passing of the Citizenship Referendum, enacted under McDowell's regime. On the night of the film festival opening, protesters, mostly mothers from African countries accompanied by their children, lined the foyer of the Irish Film Institute as the overwhelmingly white queer community gathered for the festival, whose theme, appropriately enough, was 'Family Values'. Brian Sheehan – then chair of the DLGFF committee – defended the committee's decision, while Kieran Rose, as chairperson of GLEN, roundly dismissed the objections to the McDowell invitation: 'I don't see disability or refugee groups calling for a boycott ... It's an immature kind of politics, as if nobody else has opinions on immigration. ... there's no connection between sexual orientation and politics. Your social status has more to do with it' (Linehan 2005: 11). Rose's statement in effect disowns any intersection between queerness and hierarchies of nationality, race and class and occludes the embeddedness of sexuality within regimes of governance. The discrepancy between Rose's analysis in 1995 and his defence of the invitation to McDowell in 2005 is instructive. It would seem that solidarity with the economically and ethnically peripheral has been obviated in the transition from postcolonial nation to postnational state.

Such a response demonstrates the logic of 'homonationalism' and 'sexual exceptionalism' as Jasbir K. Puar analyses them. For Puar, 'homonormative nationalism' is a complement to 'heterosexual nationalism'. Rather than undermining the nation-state, homonationalism instead bolsters it. It is a 'brand of homosexuality that operates as a regulatory script not only of normative gayness, queerness, or homosexuality, but also of the racial and national norms that reinforce these sexual subjects' (Puar 2007: 2). To gain the love of the state (to borrow Sara Ahmed's frame) the homonational subject engages and supports – identifies with and incorporates – the techniques that the state employs in securing border control of its governing norms (Ahmed 2004: 134–5). 'Sexual exceptionalism', Puar argues, 'works by glossing over its own policing of the boundaries of acceptable gender, racial and class formations. That is, homosexual sexual exceptionalism does not necessarily contradict or undermine heterosexual sexual exceptionalism; in actuality it may support forms of heteronormativity and the class, racial, and citizenship privileges they require' (2007: 4). Homonationalism and sexual exceptionalism produce the 'good' subject that the multicultural state wishes to foster in its construction of itself as tolerant, benevolent and open to diversity. That such re-formed queers are the ideal multicultural subjects for this

purpose in the Irish context is explicit in McDowell's speech at the film festival. For McDowell, the successful city is the multicultural city:

Research has shown that successful cities are those in which there is a cultural diversity. This success manifests itself economically as well as socially. A touchstone of this is the manner in which gay and lesbian rights are respected. I hope that Dublin can be viewed as a successful city by these criteria. I believe that a much more diverse, heterogeneous sense of Irish-ness will replace the narrow self-image of monochrome Catholic, nationalist Ireland. Irish-ness must be defined by inclusion rather than exclusion (McDowell: 2005).

Multiculturalism bolsters the national imaginary by installing the illusion of tolerance, diversity, and generous benevolence, an illusion that acts as an effective prophylactic against the dangers of too much inclusion by creating good and bad multicultural subjects. For Ahmed, the 'multicultural nation' relies upon bad subjects so that its imaginary 'goodness' can be sustained: 'the multicultural nation is invested in the presence of others who breach the ideality of its image. They become the sign of disturbance, which allows the ideal to be sustained as an ideal in the first place, they 'show' the injury that follows from not approximating an ideal' (Ahmed 2004: 139).

Far from threatening the iconic nation, the inclusion of these 'good' multicultural subjects will reinvigorate it both economically and cosmetically, lending a cosmopolitan edge and glister to the outmoded Irish brand, bringing the nation more in line with the imagined sophistication of its European peers. The qualified and partial inclusion of queer citizens thus lubricates the passage of the nation from postcolonial peripherality – 'monochrome nationalist Ireland' – to EU racial normativity. In this way the queer is assimilated to the newly configured postnational family, and homonationalism thereby acknowledged as strengthening the heteronormative regulation that was constituted in part by its repudiation of homosexuality. As Ahmed observes after Douglas Crimp, such straightened queer subjects are constituted through the melancholic incorporation of the object that has already rejected them (Ahmed 2004: 150). Most importantly, the homonational bolsters the whiteness of the heteronormative state. This is vividly evident in the context of the DLGFF opening, with the protesting immigrant women and their children drawing out the dissonances and occlusions of the Minister's speech by their very presence in this putatively queer space. The agents of 'queerness' in this scene are not, then, the largely white, largely middle-class queers in attendance, but the heterosexual racialized mothers and their disenfranchised children who have through their 'out-of-line' bodily orientations momentarily skewed the space of the Irish Film Institute (Ahmed 2006).

Family reunification is the issue of most concern to non-EU/EEA immigrants in Ireland (ICI 2006: v). Similarly to other EU states, the main aim

and consequence of immigration policy in this area is to prevent access to the State and its institutions as far as possible. There is no statutory entitlement to or provision for family reunification in the Republic, and the Minister for Justice and Law Reform has absolute discretionary powers in deciding on applications for family reunification for ‘third country nationals’ (ICI 2006). According to the Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI), while there is no published policy detailing how applications are assessed, it is clear from their research that the process is discriminatory on a number of fronts. While the Department will not provide any statistical information on applications made and applications refused, it is clear that the process militates against those from countries that require a visa to travel to Ireland (ICI 2006: 20–1, 42–8). The ICI describes this as discrimination on grounds of nationality, and these patterns implicitly conform to what Lentin calls ‘racial management’ (ICI 2006: 47).

Preferential treatment is also given, in some cases, to those in heterosexual marriages over and above unmarried heterosexual cohabitantes and same-sex partners. The Civil Partnership Bill will extend privileges with regard to work, education, and welfare to the ‘civilly registered partner who is already *lawfully resident* in the State’ (ICI 2008, 3). However, the early naturalization process that is open to spouses of Irish citizens will not be extended to civil partners. Moreover a ‘foreign national with a non-renewable residence permission, an entry permission which is not issued for the purpose of marriage/entering a civil partnership, or protection application entry permission cannot marry/enter into a civil partnership in Ireland with an Irish citizen, an EU citizen, or another foreign national unless the Minister grants exceptional permission’ – stipulations that demonstrate the ways in which ‘racial management’ can cut across the ‘two-tier’ system of hetero marriage and queer civil partnership (ICI 2008: 3). The ICI notes accordingly that the Civil Partnership Bill leaves same-sex partners and their dependents in a legal limbo, as, excepting recognized refugees and their partners, neither the Civil Partnership Bill nor the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill (currently withdrawn for amendment) provides for their family reunification (ICI 2008: 2). As Dil Wickremasinghe of the gay and lesbian immigrant rights group GLUE has maintained (2005), even Irish nationals ‘trying to return to Ireland with their non-EU partners have failed to secure status and have had to move to the United Kingdom or the United States’. Of acute concern is the situation of people granted refugee status ‘on the basis of being at risk of persecution on the basis of sexual orientation’, as such people will be by definition unable to provide the requisite proof of a prior legal civil partnership, and so may be denied family reunification (ICI 2008: 3).

The heteronormative machinery of the immigration process is amply illustrated by the asymmetry between the entitlements afforded to differently positioned subjects. As the ICI observes, it is ‘apparent that decisions are generally influenced by the residency status of the family member in Ireland and whether

the applicant is required to have a visa to enter the country' (ICI 2006: 20). As residency status for 'third country' migrant workers is determined by profession and salary level, and given that all applications for family reunification have to demonstrate the ill-defined 'sufficient financial means' to support any petitioning family members, issues of socio-economic and class positioning can be added to those of national origin, racial discrimination, marital status, and residency status. As Roderick Ferguson (2004: 17) has observed, 'it is not only gender and sexual integrity that are at stake for heteronormative formations, like the state, but racial integrity and purity as well'. Or, as Eithne Luibhéid puts it:

National heteronormativity is ... a regime of power that *all* migrants must negotiate, making them differently vulnerable to exclusion at the border or deportation after entry while also racializing, re-gendering, (de)nationalizing, and unequally positioning them within the symbolic economy, the public sphere, and the labour market. These outcomes, in turn, connect to the ongoing reproduction of particular forms of nationhood and national citizenship (2008a: 173).

Thus the Irish Republic's heteronormative and racial technologies are saturated with anxieties about racial and ethnic preservation exacerbated by the spectres of improper couplings and sexual deviance. In 2008, the government was instructed by the European Court of Justice to adhere to the EU directive on freedom of movement for EU nationals and their partners. The directive does not apply to 'internal situations', and thus does not allow for the free movement of non-EU partners of Irish citizens (ICI 2006: 18). Much of the media discourse was sympathetic to the government, and emphasized that the restriction of rights of residence for such non-EU partners was aimed at preventing 'marriages of convenience'. Reports in the tabloid press ignored the illegality of the state's actions, focusing instead on the 'problem' of 'illegitimate' marriages between non-Irish EU citizens and 'third country' spouses, repeatedly framed as 'illegal immigrants'. Borrowing from the racist lexicon of the 'bogus asylum seeker', these marriages were framed as 'bogus marriages' (Desmond 2010: 22, Reynolds 2008: 5). By foregrounding the 'bogus' marriage of convenience, the discourse assumes its idealized opposite: marriage for love. As Luibhéid has demonstrated, drawing on the work of Elizabeth Povelli, this 'valorized form of falling in love' is a particularly Western construct. It works to bind together potentially dissonant fields, bringing 'individual, family, community, and economic relationships and processes into alignment within the horizon of the nation-state and the current global order' (2008b: 299). As such, this 'valorized' kind of love is a highly effective instrument, simultaneously installed within the subject as a disciplinary technique while also operating as a form of biopower, benevolently granting 'life' to the good couple bound together by love, while consigning to the zone of exclusion those bad subjects who are bound by more overtly pragmatic ties.

This discourse of valorized love and illegitimate ‘convenience’ is one of the regulatory instruments of the machinery of immigration. In this context it is instructive to recall Holmquist’s framing of same-sex marriage. There the journalist invokes just this model of the disciplinary homo-subject bound by love to family and the mechanisms of the state, the model self-regulating citizen-subject. The discourse of heteronationalism and homonationalism converge in the valorized space of the ideal marriage and its regulatory function in enforcing love for the imaginary family, community and nation.

The Irish Constitution, *Bunreacht na hEireann*, places the family with its ‘imprescriptible rights’ at its imaginary, aspirational and ideological core. And yet it is clear that such rights are sparingly distributed: the family that the Constitution thus enshrines wins its special status at high cost to those who do not conform to the gendered, sexual, racial, ethnic, religious and class norms that this iconic heteronormative national family embodies and enforces. As I have suggested, too often the child pays the price for such ‘deviations’. The non-recognition of children of same-sex parents is one glaring instance of the exclusionary violence of such norms. In an Irish context, the chimera of a future preserved sacrosanct for an idealized, figurative Child² is dispersed by the endemic abuse of actual children – within the family, within state and church-run industrial schools, laundries and reformatories, at the hands of Catholic clergy, within the State care system – that has irrefutably emerged as a central aspect of the past and present of the Irish nation-state. There are other abuses, however, that are occluded in the confessional moment of a nation facing its monstrous phantoms, the unaccompanied minors who disappear from state care every year; the racially marked ‘Irish-born child’ abjected from the charmed circle of citizenship, the children of ‘third country nationals’ who are growing up in full awareness of the low esteem in which this state holds them, their families, and their communities. In 2007, the government published a proposed constitutional amendment on the rights of the child. The amendment will institute necessary legislative protections of children, but the question remains: will the logic of heteronormative governmentality and racial management continue to mock such inclusionary gestures? Who will the state deign to include, and who will be excluded from its promise of benevolent care? The answer is not necessarily a foregone conclusion.

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Chapter 8

Queer in Italy: Italian Televisibility and the 'Queerable' Audience

Luca Malici

On Monday 8 December 2008 at 22.45, the Italian National service broadcaster RAI2 aired the Oscar-winning film *Brokeback Mountain*¹ (Ang Lee 2005). While the original cinematic version featured explicit same-sex sexual acts, but lacked any images of nudity, scenes with gay kisses and sex were censored. In contrast, scenes of violence and heterosexual sex were not cut. Following strong complaints by movements such as Arcigay, Italy's foremost national gay rights organization, RAI defended its position stating that nobody realized that the film they received from the distribution house was already censored.² As a result of the contestation, the uncut version was re-aired on the same channel on 16 March 2009, however at 23.40 this time.

This chapter scrutinizes the way lesbians, gay men and bisexuals, as well as trans*, intersexed and queer individuals (LGBTQI) have been portrayed on Italian mainstream television, mainly in films, fiction programmes and 'infotainment'. Although queer narratives have been increasingly available since the 1990s, non-heteronormative plots and characters on Italian TV have encountered significant resistance. As the example of *Brokeback Mountain* shows, depictions of dissident sexualities and identities on the Italian small

1 The Italian translation *I segreti di Brokeback Mountain* (The 'Secrets' of Brokeback Mountain) suggests something clandestine and furtive – almost serving to warn the audience about the topics treated. Since 2006, Arcigay, amongst many other organizations, promoted an online petition to newspapers, media directors and Italian MPs asking that the film have prime-time airing followed by a studio debate. Information available from: www.arcigay.it/pro-brokeback-mountain [accessed: 1 January 2010].

2 *Brokeback Mountain torna su RAI2 ma stavolta senza censurare i baci ...* (Brokeback Mountain is back on RAI2 but this time without censoring kisses ...) *La Repubblica*. [Online: 10 March 2009]. Available at: www.repubblica.it/2008/12/sezioni/spettacoli_e_cultura/censura-brokeback-mountain/trasmette/trasmette.html [accessed: 27 February 2010].

screen are still negotiated as highly problematic and based on compromises to accommodate a putatively heteronormative audience.

In the first part of the chapter, I explore how society has perceived dissenting sexualities historically, questioning the significance of representation in popular culture and explaining why it is important to analyse national mainstream television in the digital era. Subsequently, I tackle the appearance and consequent increasing visibility of non-heteronormative identities on Italian TV, relating this to foreign influences and economic motives. I look at the production and circulation of queer-themed programmes on Italian TV, analysing further the regulatory regime and the role played by LGBTQI communities in safeguarding diversity of access as well as representations. Finally, I examine the role of the audience, but throughout the chapter I suggest how the concept of audience impinges crucially on all aspects considered. I conclude by arguing that media research should be directed towards historically-informed investigations of the production and regulation of non-heteronormative portrayals on TV. These studies need to be supplemented by qualitative research into audience responses to such representations. This approach is particularly relevant in countries such as Italy where the representability of dissident sexualities is still a critical issue.

Queer in Italy

Before presenting the main argument, it is important to provide the reader with an overview of Italian LGBTQI visibility and to clarify the use and significance of the Anglophone term ‘queer’ in Italy. Italian individuals and associations still prefer to use specific identity terms. For example, in a recent survey I launched in 2008 on popular Italian LGBTQI websites, just two people out of 260 respondents defined themselves as ‘queer’, whereas the vast majority preferred to use terms such as ‘homosexual’, ‘gay’, ‘lesbian’ or ‘transsexual’. The usage of ‘queer’ in Italy is sometimes taken simplistically as a synonym of LGBT or more often GLBT (gentlemen first!).³ In the acronym, ‘I’ and ‘Q’ are often left out completely. Malagrecia (2007: 6) argues that like the term ‘gay’, ‘queer’ is a foreign expression in Italy and although the first has now been completely assimilated in Italian, the meaning of the second term still remains obscure to most of the population and cannot be automatically applied.

‘Queer’ has been partially imported to Italy by non-native scholars of Italian culture and academics working in Anglo-American departments within the

3 Ironical transposition of ‘ladies first!’ in De Lauretis (1991: v). In Italy, the debate on the position of the letters in the acronym is still ongoing.

peninsula. Crucially, the reception of queer theory has been impeded by the shortage of translations⁴ and, although there is growing interest in this field, research is still in an embryonic state. Pustianaz (2010) questioned Italian scholars and activists on the significance of ‘queer’ as both identity label and theory. They propose that the term has not caught on because Italian movement(s) privilege discourses of identity politics, whereas queer is still perceived as elitist and self-referential. ‘Queer’ does not bear the same sense of resignification of a pejorative term in Italian as in English and hence has less political valence. For all these reasons, in this chapter, I use LGBTQI to name collectively subjects and sexualities in Italy, whereas I invoke ‘queer’ in its Anglophone sense to signal awareness of ongoing theoretical debates.

Historically, the peninsula presents many contradictions concerning LGBTQI identities. On the one hand, Italy is the land of Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909) the nineteenth-century criminal anthropologist who pathologized male and female homosexuality (Gibson 2004). On the other hand, this is the birthplace of Aldo Mieli (1879–1950) a pioneer in sexuality studies who founded the journal *Rassegna sugli studi sessuali* (Review of Sexual Studies) in 1921. Today he is regarded as ‘the first full-time Italian activist’ (Barilli 1999: 18). The homosexual rights movement proper was not born in Italy until the 1960s when, according to Malagrea (2007), student left-wing protests and feminist activism enabled closeted gays and lesbians to come out and proclaim their agenda. In the 1970s the first radical movement was called ‘FUORI!’ (literally ‘out!’ and the acronym of the Italian Unified Homosexual Revolutionary Front). Among its founding members was another Mieli – Mario Mieli, author of the first Italian theoretical treatise on sexualities: *Elementi di critica omosessuale* (1977), who has been considered a precursor of Queer Theory (Dean 2002, 2008).

The appearance in the Italian visual domain of dissident sexualities was delayed in comparison to other European countries due to a particular kind of repression that has always been social rather than penal (Barilli 1999). The long history of the Catholic Church’s influence as a repressive moral force on both the State and private life is undeniable. Italy has never had direct institutional repression or laws against homosexuality as such. Even during the Fascist period, the Italian government denied the existence of such identities and acts because they were simply unthinkable in a context of fascist discourses of masculinity (Barilli 1999: 20).

The fact that the State long preferred to silence these subjects and behaviours rather than persecuting them also led to a legislative vacuum. This is the same institutionalized invisibility that means homophobic crimes

4 A fundamental text such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* (1991) has not been translated into Italian to date, while Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990) was translated in 2004.

are not recognized or punished in law even today. Fundamental LGBTQI rights are ignored, including the anti-discrimination legislation advocated by the EU in 1997 with the Amsterdam Treaty. Ross (2009) argues that in the last 20 years both left and right governments have failed to acknowledge rights and uphold EU legislation. In particular, since the 1990s, various bills have been presented to Parliament for the legal acknowledgement of same-sex couples. There have been different drafts such as PACS (Pact of Civil Unions), DICO (Rights and Duties of Stably Cohabiting Individuals) and DIDORE (Reciprocal Rights and Duties). However, at the time of writing, no legislation has been passed.

Although this particular battle has attracted media attention, other issues seldom reach the front page. For example, although those transgendered people wishing to transition physically have access to free sex reassignment surgery in Italy once they have passed rigid medical and bureaucratic verification (Law 164/1982), this often becomes an obligation for them rather than an option. Unlike most European countries such as the UK and Spain, Italian law does not allow the alteration of identity documents for individuals who are, or decide to remain, in transition. Historical and legislative invisibility are mutually and intimately connected to the ways in which LGBTQI realities have been perceived and represented by heteronormative society in the media.

A Social and Technological Perspective

Steven Seidman claims that 'Italy seems to be collocated somewhere between those societies characterized by a strong repression and those in which homosexuals are practically included' (Rinaldi and Cappotto 2003: 10). Despite ongoing battles for fundamental rights, heteronormative society still has difficulty seeing LGBTQI identities as viable. Prejudice and bigotry are ever present in the peninsula where, for example, two men cannot kiss at night by the Colosseum for fear of being arrested or walk hand-in-hand on the street in southern Italy without facing queer bashing.⁵ Because of this, too many individuals are still prey to internalized homophobia or pseudo-invisibility and still live closeted or ghettoized experiences and lifestyles.

5 On 30th July 2007 two young men were stopped by a patrol and taken to the police station. The trial is ongoing at time of writing. The police maintain that it was not just a kiss. Available at: www.corriere.it/Primo_Piano/Cronache/2007/07_Luglio/27/bacio_gay_roma.shtml. The second incident was filmed by a popular Italian programme 'Lucignolo' aired at 23:50 on 31 May 2005 for Italia1 (Mediaset). Available at: www.arcigaymilano.org/crono/rsdossier.asp?IDEvento=506&IDRS=21896&offset=24 [accessed: 16 February 2010].

The general Italian view of dissenting sexualities is summed up by the result of one of the very few surveys that have investigated the public perception of homosexualities in Italy (in Dall'Orto 2005). It is significant to note that the only dissident sexualities mentioned are gay and lesbian. In the survey, 40 per cent of the sample still saw these subjects as 'perverts' and 'mentally ill', 2 per cent perceived them as 'sinners', whereas on a general level, no more than a quarter of the respondents understood lesbians and gays as 'normal'. Further to this, 61 per cent of the sample claimed never in their life to have knowingly been acquainted with any individual with a non-normative sexuality. What emerges from this snapshot is the rooted lack of knowledge and opportunities to challenge normative preconceptions, hatred and *phobias (homo-, lesbo-, bi- and trans-). On a positive note, when asked if they had a 'problem' with homosexuality 82 per cent of the sample under the age of 24 answered no. Can this be explained by the rising presence of non-heteronormative narratives and characters in the media, for example in teen-dramas and programmes aimed at adolescents?

There is a close relationship between the availability of certain representations in popular media and the perception of LGBTIQI identities in the eyes of the wider national audience. TV functions as an important source of information and knowledge for and about those minorities targeted by heterosexism and *phobia. It provides, potentially, a platform for debate between mainstream and minoritized sexualities, and a forum for the exploration of diversity both within and outside of national boundaries. This is particularly true in an era in which new media are consumed individually and content personalized according to users' tastes. In a previous study (Malici 2007) where I considered the impact of new media on Italian sexual minorities, I concluded that, although new media have a paramount role for these subjects and their sense of community, they do not serve the purpose of challenging heteronormativity on a wider level. Paradoxically, mainstream TV offers fewer channels than the Internet, satellite or TV on demand; viewers have less choice over what they watch and cannot avoid queer representations as selectively as on the net.

National mainstream television is of paramount importance, being a cohesive, affordable and nationally distributed service as well as the most widely consumed media form. According to CENSIS, an Italian statistical body, in 2009 more than 97.8 per cent⁶ of the population watched television regularly, and this figure does not seem to have decreased with the growth of the internet and the progressive switchover to a digital TV in 2012. Davis and Needham argue that: 'Television has regularly been configured as a domestic medium and, as such, closely associated with the home, the family, the quotidian; in other words, the heteronormative' (2009: 6). Italian mainstream TV remains a

6 'Comunicazione e Media' Rapporto annuale 2009 available at: www.censis.it/27/7/280/339/6954/6982/6979/content.asp [accessed: 8 February 2010].

heteronormative fortress and one of the most insular and undemocratic means of communication which largely fails to represent most sexual minorities.

Representational Perspective

In Italy, national analogue television consists of three networks: RAI, the public service broadcasting company; Mediaset, a set of commercial channels owned by Prime Minister Berlusconi's family; La7 and MTV Italy, owned by Telecom Italia. Significantly, apart from a segment of the public service broadcasting, programming has mainly been dictated by audience ratings and commercial advertisers. Italian queer televisibility was severely restricted by the social model of the nuclear family and the influence of the Catholic Church. This, together with institutional disinterest and the failure of LGBTQI movements to promote and safeguard queer portrayals, has favoured the pervasive silence surrounding discourses of non-normative forms of sexuality on mainstream TV for more than three decades.

In fact, before the 1990s, only foreign cinema had represented dissenting sexualities in Italy. Dyer (2003) argues that cinema has probably been more significant as a central definer of sexualities than any other cultural institution of the past century, as the representation of sexuality on television has been severely restricted. Many critics have argued that queer visibility in films and TV programmes has been neglected and replaced by a recuperative reading practice on the part of non-normative viewers. This expedient has been called 'bricolage' (Dyer 1977), 'queer reading' (Doty 1993), 'poaching' (Gross 2001) or simply 'connotation' (Miller 1991), referring to the indeterminacy of certain texts. It consists of interpreting visual imagery that 'belongs' to somebody else to one's own advantage. In this case, images resembled the structures of heteronormativity, but had connotations that allowed queer viewers to read behind the dominant meaning and identify with them. This expedient served the purpose of preserving the heteronormative status quo while 'gay audiences might well have imagined that they were being winked at from the closet' (Gross 2001: 153). According to Grillini (2003) it was only during the 1980s that the pandemic of AIDS forced the Italian mass media to acknowledge 'homosexual subjects', almost always men, making them visible to the wider population, even though their depiction was unedifying, related directly to drug use and to the threat of worldwide catastrophe.

American and Economic Influences

In the 1990s, films, programmes and serials imported from the United States allowed the emergence of gay and lesbian characters and topics on Italian

networks. This implies that US productions had a progressive influence on the initial circulation of gay-themed programmes in the peninsula, making available more explicit stories and identities that Italian producers had until then totally ignored. Becker's analysis (2006) of the reasons behind the rising visibility of gays and lesbians on the American channels in the 1990s in comparison to the same phenomenon on Italian TV is illuminating. He argues that this process was characterized by the particular political situation of the Clinton era, increasing multiculturalism and the politics of sexuality, together with economic transformations of a more competitive media market, narrowcasting satellite television and the rise of niche markets for 'LGBT' consumers. (Becker does not include 'IQ' at the end of the acronym.) In this cultural climate, lesbian and gay topics became a precious device for television networks to target a quality audience of educated heterosexual viewers interested in 'edgy' programming. Likewise, Arthurs (2004) admits that understanding the increasing presence of queer subjects in contemporary television means that we must also consider their commodification and the potential for their exploitation, as queer narratives may be used to appeal to and titillate a heterosexual audience and raise revenue for advertisers.

Differently from the United States, the decision by Italian channels to broadcast more stories about gays and lesbians was driven principally by economic motives. It follows Italian networks' traditional practices of importing audiovisual products, mainly from the United States. It was – and still is – cheaper to buy the rights to an American TV serial, dub and reuse it on different occasions and seasons, than to fund Italian-made productions. This is especially the case if the US serials are products which have proved to attract high ratings in their homeland.

As Buonanno (2008) argues, the international flow of television productions can represent both an imperialistic cultural threat and an economic, hybridizing resource. US films and TV series with gay male characters and, less often, lesbians, symbolized for some a reaction to the exclusion and the repressive logic operated by Italian mainstream media. Most importantly, for more than a decade, from 1990 to 2000, discourses of non-heteronormative sexualities on Italian TV were entrusted to foreign representations. The implications of this are multifarious. LGBTQI individuals could not totally recognize themselves in portrayals that are set in non-Italian cultural contexts. Furthermore this might have reinforced the belief of normative society that queer identities and practices just did not belong to the Italian culture.

Contemporary Problems of Access and Representation

The year 2000 represented a significant year for LGBTQI people because Rome hosted World Pride to coincide with the Roman Catholic Church celebrations

of the jubilee year. According to Luongo (2002) the success of World Pride provoked a national and international media backlash. This had also an effect on the way Italian mainstream television portrayed these identities. Shortly after the turn of this century in fact, Italian productions started to appear, firstly introducing stereotyped secondary gay characters into TV dramas, such as the effeminate hairdresser in *The Beauty of Women* (*Il bello delle donne*, Maurizio Ponzi, Canale5, 2001), and later reaching prime-time broadcasting on the state network via a handful of more edifying mini-series such as *Family Flaw* (*Un difetto di famiglia*, Alberto Simone, RAI2, 2002) *My Son* (*Mio Figlio*, Luciano Odorisio, RAI1, 2005) and *The Father of the Brides* (*Il padre delle spose*, Ludovico Gasperini, RAI1, 2006). With the exception of the latter, these addressed the ‘problem’ of gay men in a heterosexual world, trying to dispel bias and prejudice that straight people harbour towards homosexuals.

If the tendency to represent male homosexuality on TV has afforded some limited visibility, significantly, it has also reinforced exclusions of other sexual minorities. There is a palpable imbalance of visibility in relation to different sexualities and identities on Italian TV, however this seems to be the case outside Italy too. Through my research at the RAI archives, for example, it transpires that, from 1990 to 2008, 87 per cent of the already few programmes aired with queer-themed topics have been dedicated to gay males; 10 per cent have featured and referred to transvestites, transgender or transsexual subjects, while the representation of lesbians accounts for just 3 per cent of all queer-themed productions. The presence of bisexuals, intersexed individuals, and other queers is seldom acknowledged or is completely excluded from the agenda.

However, after speculations on veiled gay males and lesbians in almost every edition of the Italian version of the reality show *Big Brother* (*Grande Fratello*, Canale5, Endmol Italia, 2000–2010), recent editions have seen the presence in the house of Silvia Burgio in 2008 and Gabriele Belli in 2010, the first respectively male-to-female and female-to-male transgender participants. Although queer visibility in this kind of TV programme is widely criticized, the progressive impact of these subjects on Italian viewers is undeniable. For this reason, Vladimir Luxuria, a transwoman involved with many different media and political projects, including acting as member of the Italian parliament for the Communist Refoundation Party (2006–2008), took part in, and happened to win, the sixth edition of the Italian *Celebrity Survivor* (*L'isola dei famosi*, Rai2, Magnolia, 2008).

Despite the increasing visibility of certain identities, the heterosexual rubric still dictates today that, whilst homosexuals might be acceptable if derided, or presented in sugar-coated or stereotyped ways, same-sex acts and eroticism are deplored and confined to late night slots. On the one hand, there is a severe restriction in representing male same-sex kissing because TV executives assume the audience might perceive it as too uncomfortable. Consequentially, this has

favoured desexualized representations of male subjects. On the other hand, the sexual representation of lesbians is sometimes more available on television because of the titillating effect on heterosexual male viewers. Those gay and lesbian individuals represented are always white, wealthy and fit, whereas gays and lesbians of non-normative sizes and abilities, ethnicities, and socio-economic classes are never mentioned on Italian channels. Do the available representations on TV challenge the norms and preconceptions of the heteronormative audience, then, or simply reaffirm them? Who is making the decisions regarding what may be viewed?

Regulation of Televisibility and Tele-activism

The time of ‘Zaps’ (Gross 2001) where gay activists used to forcefully intervene in live TV shows with slogans and protests, has now passed, even in Italy. Both mediascape and society have changed. Individuals with a non-normative sexuality are now ‘allowed’ into programmes and talk shows and can express their views with a certain degree of freedom. However, ensuring fair, accurate and inclusive representations for different sexual minorities in film and fiction is still difficult in a deregulated and hostile environment.

Censorship, either total or partial, is still a common practice by Italian networks, allegedly being the easiest deterrent against ‘deviant’ representations. An example for total censorship was in 2001, when La7, the so-called transgressive channel, bought the first series of *Queer as Folk* (Russel T. Davis 1999) from Channel 4, considered one of the most progressive representations of gay males on TV (Davis 2007). Although advertised to be broadcast in September, at the last moment, this programme was banned and replaced. Since then it has never appeared on Italian mainstream television, whereas it was aired in 2002–2003, still with some major cuts and in a late slot by Gay TV and Canal Jimmy, two Italian satellite networks, whose target audience are principally gay men.

As previously seen in the case of *Brokeback Mountain*, partial censorship usually consists of the manipulation of or complete elision of an episode from a series. Another example is related to the Italian version of the teen comedy-horror, *Buffy – The Vampire Slayer* (Joss Whedon 1997) aired in 2000, on Italia1, part of Mediaset. The entire episode, ‘New moon rising’, in which a secondary female character, Willow, falls in love with the witch Tara, was elided from the serial. This also required some heavy cuts to subsequent episodes (Jelardi and Bassetti 2006).

Although the examples proposed were supposed to be acceptable to late night slots, this has not impeded network producers from simply not screening them, avoiding anticipated problems and critique from viewers and consumer

associations. Scheduling practices are usually differentiated according to time, channel and genre, in accordance with assumptions about who will be watching, paying scrupulous attention to protecting young viewers. However, it seems to me that the Italian adult audience is prevented from watching representations of certain lifestyles at night on national TV.

Admittedly, programmes such as the American serials *The L Word* (Ilene Chaiken et al. 2004, LA7 2005) and the Italian version of the format *Queer Eye for a Straight Guy* (*I fantastici 5*, LA7 2004) have been regularly aired on mainstream TV. Nonetheless, they do regularly face severe criticism by Catholic associations and MOIGE, the Italian parents' movement, whose mission is to protect children and to gain more rights for (heteronormative) parents.

The failure to create in Italy a visible and organized counter-movement, to monitor, protect and favour LGBTQI representations in the mainstream media, similar to the Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation (GLAAD) in America, has lessened the opportunity for opposition, solidarity and institutional support for the production and distribution of alternative messages. In particular, favouring and promoting more opportunities for different sexual orientations, both in front of and behind the camera, could be a way to achieve more inclusive representation on television.

Crucially, the absence of a political debate and specific legislation regarding TV portrayals of LGBTQI subjects limits the representation of dissident sexualities, favouring normative and traditionalist restrictions and representations. It would be helpful in future to examine if and how the European Union advocates such portrayals and whether member states follow recommendations. Within the country, it is the duty of regulatory bodies such as AGCOM, the Italian authority for communications in Italy, to protect the public interest, promoting plurality and protecting audiences from offensive or harmful content. To date, the *Codice di autoregolamentazione TV e minori* (Self-regulation for TV with regard to minors), implemented in 2002 to safeguard minors, introduced a protection system according to time slots. In agreement with this, for example, AGCOM with the deliberation N.143/07/CSP⁷ fined *Anno Zero*, a RAI2 programme of 8 March 2007 debating legislation of same-sex unions, 100,000 Euro for having shown 'passionate kisses among homosexuals between 22:34 and 22:35' without signposting it.

Importantly, it is not clear whether Italian LGBTQI people are supposed to be included in that idea of the audience that needs to be both promoted and protected by these regulatory bodies. For now, all the decisions concerning queer televisibility in Italy rest with single channels or network clusters and, on

7 Integral text available at: www2.agcom.it/provv/CSP/d_143_07.pdf [accessed: 23 February 2010].

an external level, are affected by the objections of Catholic associations and heteronormative viewers.

In my opinion, mainstream television can constitute a pedagogical and liberating tool and may enable queer literacy, giving normative society the chance to read and understand dissimilar lifestyles. Since the practice of individual coming out represents a political action, the coming out of queer subjects and topics on national channels has had a paramount impact on LGBTQI subjects but also on heteronormative audiences. Increasing explicitness on TV, for example, can embarrass or offend heteronormative viewers and, hence, advertisers. However, emphasizing the risks rather than the potential pleasures of queer sexualities on television, has induced TV executives and regulatory bodies to protect the audience from sexual knowledge for far too long, reiterating discourses of *phobia and ignorance.

Queering Heteronormative Audience Studies

Having discussed the history and visibility of queer subjects and experiences on the Italian small screen, highlighting problems of production, circulation and regulation of such portrayals, further investigation is required of discourses surrounding the complex and fragmented construct of the audience.

In Italy, apart from a recent publication, *Queer TV: omosessualità e trasgressione nella televisione italiana* (Jelardi and Bassetti 2006) which is little more than a list of gay, lesbian and transvestite (as distinct from trans*) characters and topics on the small screen and which lacks critical and contextualized references, broader studies on the representation of non-normative forms of sexuality on TV are nonexistent. The majority of research available on this topic comes from Anglophone countries, and focuses on specific cultural contexts in which socio-historical, political and economic contingencies are extremely different from other, less widely investigated, countries such as Italy. In Italy, debates on these matters are in the early stages and principally reflect research from the USA and the UK.

Although all the available studies are important contributions in understanding the politics of non-heteronormative identities on TV, these publications seem to celebrate their increasing visibility rather than analysing and challenging its reasons and effects. Crucially, there is a general lack of research outside the televisual text. Becker (2006: 235) claims that ‘to understand television as a cultural practice more fully we need to examine the mutually determining relationships among specific programmes, the industry that produces them, the audience that view them, and the social contexts within which these activities take place’.

In relation to this, criticizing the ‘overtexualization of lesbian and gay experiences’ in queer studies, Ken Plummer affirms that ‘there are important studies to be done in the empirical world, and obsession with texts is dangerous indeed. It is time to move beyond the text – and rapidly’ (1998: 611). In line with Becker’s and Plummer’s views, it seems that the main focus of queer research in relation to television discourses should proceed from the investigation of a fixed text/script, to the ever-changing and active reception of meanings. Although research approaches have gradually widened in other areas of Queer investigation, to date, there is still little engagement and field research on broader patterns of audiences and actual contexts of television viewing.

TV audience studies have been largely and almost exclusively dedicated to investigations of the monolithic conception of binary gender. Studies on audience response to non-heteronormative representations on TV remain an under-explored field. From the 1970s, the critical and political agenda of British cultural studies targeted important topics such as capitalism, racism and patriarchy, but devoted less or no attention to sexual minorities. Between the 1980s and 1990s a relevant branch of empirical research on gender and audience was developed in cultural studies by those scholars informed by feminist criticism. Although their trajectories are dissimilar, the example of feminist research is particularly valuable, providing frameworks, tools and theories to be exploited further in LGBTQI and Queer studies, moving beyond the heteronormative spectrum.

In 1985, Richard Dyer published an essay entitled ‘Taking popular television seriously’ where he argues that ‘representation should also make us think of the *audience*; in this inflection, we should include ourselves’ (1985: 45). In 1989, Larry Gross called for ‘studies of lesbian and gay audiences’ whose responses ‘should be included in the emerging research agenda’ (1989: 142). Since then, there have been a few examples of reception studies aimed at specific portions of queer spectatorship, for instance Jenkins (2004) analysed LGBT fandom and the reception of *Star Trek*. Once again, these contributions appeal to the abovementioned practice of the aberrant reading, which has always enabled queer viewers to read behind the dominant meaning. Although this kind of reading is exquisitely queer, it inevitably denies the overt representation of identity. Crucially, this practice could also be paraphrased as existing but passing as invisible for heteronormative society. This makes it simply another chapter in the history of queer (in)visibility.

In the last 20 years, the number of studies of this type has increased, together with the availability of new films, programmes and TV serials with queer narratives. Although they provide important acknowledgement of the pleasures and modes of non-heteronormative TV viewing, studies based on the experiences and opinions of fans are necessarily limited and partial, and do not shed light on the responses of the wider audience. An isolated

example of research with a broader approach to audience configuration was offered by Josh Gamson (1998). His research is based on a tripartite model of cultural investigation that looks at the production, textual content and reception of American talk shows. Interestingly, he is the first scholar to take into consideration the response of heterosexually-identified viewers in contrast to those of lesbian- and gay-identified ones. Even though audience reception is not the central part of his study, Gamson juxtaposed the reactions of different groups to the same televised content. Without dissecting or isolating portions and sections of viewers, a holistic approach in understanding and researching the audience is particularly appealing. In relation to this, Michelle Aaron (2009: 73) states that ‘we are not yet at the point where audience research has been carried out on the television practices of families with lesbian and gay members, whether as children or as parents, or of other cohabiting combinations: of students, of friends, etc, who may include non-heterosexual, even queer members’.

Audiences are still wrongly imagined and treated as compulsory heterosexuals and are built around established expectations and obsolete assumptions regarding traditional understanding of sex and gender. As Brooker and Jermyn observed: ‘the “audience” is equally and simultaneously identifiable and elusive, imaginable and unpredictable, and enduringly fascinating for all those reasons’ (2003: 4). These adjectives are familiar to queer scholars and a parallel between the theorization of queer and the one of the audience is not difficult to imagine. Moores suggests that the plural ‘audiences’ is preferable to singular form, saying that ‘there is no stable entity which we can isolate and identify as the media audience, no single object that is unproblematically “there” for us to observe and analyze’ (1995: 5).

My reading of audience, the singular version, is an all-inclusive term and represents an aggregate of viewers in all the possible arrays of identities. It is a volatile, potentially queer and queerable compound of options and possibilities. Like ‘queer’, ‘audience’ covers diverse but specific constellations of identities, refusing categorization but avoiding rendering invisible certain less well-represented categories. Audience research cannot be limited to studying just a synaesthetic part for the whole; instead, it could be valuable in revealing queer and normative perceptions of televisual portrayals in a holistic manner.

Conclusions

The matter of visibility of dissident sexualities has always been a problem in Italy. This must be correlated to the series of ways in which, and historical-cultural reasons why, Italian society has perceived these subjects and behaviours negatively. Television represents a pivotal medium through which

heteronormative discourses may be disputed. Since the 1990s, there has been an increasing visibility of queer subjects and topics on the Italian small screen. As well as celebrating this as an important achievement, we must also scrutinize the reasons behind it, its consequences and the future challenges it poses. TV access for LGBTIQI people as well as the quantity and quality of representations are still problematic today. Questioning available representations together with national and international regulatory regimes allows us to comprehend what can be done in terms of engagement, activism and research.

TV executives and producers cater to a predictable audience based on categories of consumers that normalize and restrict programmes. Censorship, stereotypes and scheduling practices are designed to protect an idealized portion of 'normal' Italian viewers from experiencing extended unease or discomfort, according to codes of taste, decency and standard 'family values'. TV research in relation to non-heteronormative identities has been relatively snubbed by scholars and academics, or directed exclusively towards partial investigations. Integrated studies into queer televisibility and audience perception of such representations should be included in the emerging agenda for future queer scholarship. This approach is particularly relevant in Italy but could also be attempted in other countries in similar situations. Considering the audience and discourses surrounding queer televisibility, valuable deconstructive tools of investigation would offer a reflexive site to ponder where queer identities stand in a specific culture, while enabling scholars to execute examinations of public-political, as well as private, arenas, breaking down the false distinction between them.

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Chapter 9

Queer in the Netherlands: Pro-Gay and Anti-Sex – Sexual Politics at a Turning Point

Gert Hekma

The sexopolitical landscape of the Netherlands has changed considerably over the last few years. From a country with a liberal reputation, it has become illiberal in many respects. This is a development I will discuss in this chapter by focusing on attitudes towards homo/sexual issues. It must, however, be made clear that this development is strongly connected with anxieties about national identity, and in particular about immigration. There is a great fear that ‘new Dutch’, and especially Muslim citizens, reject some Dutch norms, including the principle of equality for men and women and for hetero and homo citizens. At the same time, the Dutch have started to worry about their sexual freedoms, and have put in place the means to limit these. The question now stands: what does Dutch sexual liberalism factually mean? (See Hekma 2005, 2006.)

The Sexual Revolution

Since the 1970s, the Netherlands has been regarded as one of the most liberal countries in the world with regard to sexual politics. It transformed itself from a country that was strongly religious and conservative in sexual morals to one that is highly secular in such matters. In the nineteenth century its politics were predominantly liberal and, for much of the twentieth century, predominantly Christian. The liberals inherited a French style legal system that was sexually tolerant as it enshrined the principle of the separation of Church and State. The Christians amended this in 1911 in a restrictive direction and introduced new laws on homosexuality, abortion, contraception and pornography. They added to the Republican model of the French – all citizens are equal before the law and no one will have special rights – the communitarian model of pillarization – whereby Protestant, Catholic, humanist and possibly other groups were ‘sovereign in

their own circle'.¹ In the 1950s the two social groups that had been most in favour of a strict sexual morality, the Catholics and the orthodox Reformed Calvinists, were moved by psychiatrists and social workers to reconsider their sexual values. In the course of the 1960s, these groups became more tolerant of sexual variation including masturbation, homosexuality and premarital sex. The 1960s also witnessed the rise of the youth, student and feminist movements that by and large supported sexual liberalism. Parallel to this development, Dutch society became highly secular (nowadays 50 per cent of the population observes no religion whereas a mere 20 per cent visits religious institutions more than once a month), while the religious pillars and parties lost their predominant position. The relative strength of the sexual reform movement, and the lack of resistance by religious and political authorities, resulted in a rather easy transition to a more liberal sexual culture. In 1967, the leader of the influential Dutch Society for Sexual Reform (NVSH), a civil organization comprising, at that time, 200,000 members, gave a lecture in which she opposed the criminalization of homosexuality, prostitution and pornography; taboos on pre- and extramarital sex; and impediments on divorce. She suggested the need to break down the straightforward understanding of gender and sexuality. Although she foresaw these changes for 2000, most were realized within ten years. (The exception is the last point: if anything, gender and sexual roles have rather hardened; see Nabrink 1978 for NVSH and Kennedy 1995 for the sexual revolution in Holland.)

The change in public opinion was followed by changes in the law. Divorce was made easier; pornography was decriminalized. Contraception became more widely available, including its prescription to adolescent women as a facet of medical care, and access to abortion was made easier. The law governing the differential age of consent for homosexual and heterosexual sex (21 versus 16 years), was changed in 1971; both were set at 16.² An Equal Rights Law covering issues of ethnicity, gender and sexual preference was introduced in 1994. The final stage of legal sexual liberalization was the decriminalization of prostitution in 2000 and the opening of marriage for same-sex couples in

1 From the late nineteenth century until the 1960s, the Netherlands had a social organization in which all citizens were members of a distinct community or 'pillar' – Roman Catholic, Protestant or Humanist divided again between Social Democrat and Liberal. For the individual these 'pillars' encompassed all aspects of life. For example, each had its own schools, churches, media, political parties, sport and cultural organizations. This community-based social order collapsed in the 1960s as a result of processes that sociologists describe using general terms such as individualization, secularization, democratization, greater social and spatial mobility and the rise of national media.

2 Between 1989 and 2002 the age of sexual consent was set at 12 under the condition that the child itself, its parents or child custody did not file a complaint.

2001, the Netherlands being in both cases the first country to institute such laws. A new moral majority of progressive values began to set the tone (see also Naerssen 1987; Schuyf and Krouwel 1999; Hekma 2006).

2001: The Turning Point

2001 was for LGBT Holland marked by three major events: firstly the opening up of marriage for same-sex couples; secondly the declaration of imam Khalid El-Moumni on homosexuals; and thirdly the rise of Pim Fortuyn in the political arena. The first event got more international than local attention as it coincided with the engagement of the crown prince that mesmerized the national media. It was a blow for the royal family that the betrothal of the future king was overshadowed in the global news by marrying queens. The symbol of the Dutch nation, a royal family that marries, reproduces and was no longer so Protestant with a Catholic crown princess, was confronted in this year with Muslim imams who rejected Dutch culture because of its tolerance for same-sex marriage.³ The third event was the amazing rise to political power of a right-wing queen, Pim Fortuyn.

With the opening up of marriage for same-sex couples in 2001 there were no longer any provisions in civil or criminal law that discriminated against homosexuals. The legal fight for gay rights had effectively come to an end. As a result, most Dutch citizens, both gay and straight, started to believe that the struggle for homosexual emancipation was over. They argued that there was no longer any need for a movement. But these legal changes have proved no guarantee for the social acceptance of gays and lesbians. Teachers have become less willing to come out of the closet and gay men face verbal and physical abuse on their cruising grounds and in certain urban neighbourhoods, especially those with a high percentage of residents from ethnic minorities. The self-congratulatory complacency that has become a hallmark of Dutch discussions of homosexual emancipation and sexual freedoms appears to be misplaced. Homosexuality is still a problem. Authorities such as school boards or policemen continue to refuse to defend gay and lesbian rights. Since the

3 The new crown-princess was the first member of the royal family ever to visit a gay and lesbian event. This was in 2008, and her visit was organized by the government itself. The royals, very beloved in the gay bar scene, had never before attended such a celebration notwithstanding their very regular presence at religious, ethnic and other community festivals. In 2002 a press release by the queen in collaboration with the prime minister stated that her son was not gay as rumour said, and that he was very unhappy with such stories (*Volkserant*, 17 February 2001). The opposite is, of course, unthinkable.

1998 Amsterdam Gay Games, many straight and some gay people have begun to say that homosexuals should not be too open and visible, so as not to offend others. Others suggest that, given the availability of bars and discos and marital options for gays and lesbians, they do not need to flaunt their sexuality in public any longer. They propose that it would be better to close down gay sex venues such as parks, dark rooms and saunas because they claim, despite the facts, that straights have no such options.

A chief source of conflict around homosexuality concerns the Muslim community. About 10 per cent of the Dutch population is made up of recent immigrants. The major groups – Turks and Moroccans, plus a substantial number of Surinamese and other migrants – are Muslims. As a result, Muslims now make up 6 per cent of the Dutch population, half of them (some half a million people) being active believers. Within the Muslim religious community homosexuality is generally condemned. On May 3 2001, a month after the Dutch celebrated their first same-sex marriages in the Amsterdam City Hall, they were startled by a ‘behind the news’ TV programme that interviewed imam Khalid El-Moumni. This unknown Muslim leader, interviewed in the context of antigay violence in his home town of Rotterdam, stated that Europeans were less than dogs and pigs because they condoned same-sex marriage. The Dutch were shocked. Some gay men filed a complaint against the imam. Others remembered that not so long ago several clergymen and priests, including an archbishop and a bishop, had been in court for denouncing gays and lesbians but had not been convicted because of the right to exercise freedom of religious expression. The imam would be acquitted for the same reason. Journalists reported on the widespread male homosexual practices in Morocco, and speculated that these probably went on among Dutch Moroccans too. Some politicians wanted to extradite the imam and the prime minister used his ten-minute weekly interview on television to make it clear that no one should denounce homosexuals – the first time he had come to the defense of gays and lesbians in the seven years of his tenure. The minister responsible for integration invited a hastily composed group of imams to tell them that they should respect gays and lesbians. Most imams interviewed in the media, however, made it clear that same-sex behaviour was a sin in Islam (Hekma 2002).

As so often in intercultural communication, this represented a complex confluence of opinions. Khalid El-Moumni’s remark was generally seen as antigay, but in fact it was, beyond that, anti-European. The Netherlands just happened to be the first country in Europe to introduce such marriages. Indeed, according to most gays and lesbians there was in fact no such thing as ‘same-sex marriage’ in the Netherlands, because marriage was the same for all. The statement of the imam was also seen as endorsing the antigay violence allegedly perpetrated more often by Muslim than non-Muslim male youngsters. In fact the imam had denounced this violence in a part of the interview that was

not aired. The question was also posed as to why these queer-bashing young men were seen predominantly as Muslim and not as Moroccan or Turkish, and, correspondingly, why 'white' queer-bashers were not defined as 'Christian' (Hekma 2002). Overall the interventions of the imams on homosexuality strengthened the perception that recent immigrants to the multicultural Dutch society were overly traditional. In the early 1990s Muslim youngsters appeared to be overrepresented in crime statistics, including those for rape and sexual harassment. Later, the Dutch expressed concern about women veiling themselves or not being allowed to go out to party like their brothers; about female and male circumcision; about honour killings (the murder by family members of female and also male kin who have dishonoured the family by sleeping with 'inappropriate' partners); about 'import' marriages (the expectation had been that the second generation would marry partners from Holland, but in fact some 75 per cent married partners from the country of origin); and about sex education and co-education – in particular the refusal to mix boys and girls in sports classes. Authorities and scholars voiced the opinion that the new immigrants would integrate better when their housing, education and labour conditions improved. They completely neglected sexual issues that have proved to be more explosive in the debate on integration, including the disrespect for women and for gays and lesbians that many Dutch felt the new immigrants expressed. Muslims were seen as representative of this attitude (Gijssberts and Dagevos 2009).

Of course, nobody knows exactly how prevalent disrespect for women and homosexuals is among the new immigrants. In surveys, 95 per cent of the 'white' Dutch say that they accept gays and lesbians as opposed to only 60 per cent of Dutch Turks. Eighty-three per cent of the first group allegedly have no problem with gay marriage, compared to 31 per cent of the Moroccans and 26 per cent of the Turks in Holland (Keuzenkamp 2006: 48). These numbers though hide a high percentage of politically correct answers as many respondents, especially among the 'white' Dutch, know what responses are 'desirable'. The first ethnic party with a political programme, the Arab-European League, identified three main things they wanted to restrain: prostitution, homosexuality and alcohol (Sijssjes and Huinder 2003). Yet there is no question that many others are eager to integrate into Dutch society. Many new Dutch are women who embrace emancipation while some are gay or lesbian and enjoy sexual freedoms in the Netherlands. Many others among this immigrant youth appreciate Dutch freedoms that don't exist in their (parents') country of origin. The new gay immigrants have established specialized organizations and they opened their own bar in 2001. They also set up in 1997 a successful foundation *Yoesuf* (since 2009 *Malaica*), which provides information on Islam and homosexuality, organizes workshops and offers social support. On the other hand, many new Dutch stress gender differences and see women who

dress ‘daringly’ as sluts whom they can threaten. Moroccan male youngsters are indeed more prominent when it comes to antigay slurs or queer-bashing. Such behaviour gives the ‘white’ Dutch the idea that they are seeing a regression to a time when gender and sexual rights meant much less than they do today. Women and gays after the 1960s were a victorious minority but nowadays many have the feeling of being on the losing side once more.

The rise of Pim Fortuyn in the political arena in 2001 and his murder in 2002 meant another watershed in Dutch politics. His loudly voiced anti-migrant sentiments received full attention from the media. Although he showed some nostalgia for a past Holland and was conservative on gender issues, this was certainly not the case with regard to sexual politics. He was progressive on issues of gay and intergenerational sexuality, and expressed his anxiety about the sexual morality of the new immigrants. His persona was dandy-esque and openly gay, and he made no secret of his visits to dark rooms or his sexual experiences with Moroccan youth – which taught him, he said, how ‘backward’ Muslim culture was. Just days before the national elections, he was murdered by an animal rights activist who was angered by his defense of the fur industry. His party ‘List Pim Fortuyn’ (2002–2007) saw a landslide victory and entered parliament with 26 seats out of a total of 150 – albeit with no explicit programme on gay issues and no MPs who were gay or lesbian. His personal gay politics disappeared with him from the party’s interests (Pels 2003).

Homosexuality had always been a left-liberal issue in the Netherlands. The meagre support for gay and lesbian emancipation until the end of the twentieth century came mainly from Labour, the Green Left and both liberal parties. After 2001, this changed completely and ever since it has been the (extreme) right that has become the main supporter of gay rights. They use the Dutch tradition of women’s and gay emancipation – that they never much favoured before – as a stick with which to beat the Muslims and a way to express their Islamophobia, which, as far as some Muslim attitudes regarding the rights of women, gays and lesbians are concerned, may be plausible and not unfounded. Ayan Hirschi Ali, Rita Verdonk who created her own list ‘Pride of the Netherlands’ (TON), Geert Wilders who founded the Party for the Freedom (PVV) or Marco Pastors of List Pim Fortuyn in Rotterdam all took up the cause of gays and lesbians. On the other hand the left parties, especially Labour, shied away from controversial issues that might have a negative impact upon their many immigrant voters. Journalists who continued to be leftist were accused of belonging to the ‘left church’ of people that still believed in a multicultural society – and this was perceived as an insult after 2001. Also the gay movement changed its leadership from mainly Labour supporters to a close ally of Verdonk’s. Gays and lesbians

themselves are divided on the issue of the state of progress on homosexual issues: a third thinks that progress has been made in recent years, another third thinks the opposite, while the final third claims it does not know. The first group probably refers to legal changes and the second one to lack of social change. Left intellectuals, both gay and straight, now say – in order to distance themselves from the right – that homosexuals are faced by few problems today in the Netherlands, underlining that there is no need any longer for queer politics. In short, the Dutch have become confused in the aftermath of 2001, and many admit to this.

The Aftermath

From research carried out on behalf of the Dutch government on the acceptance of gays and lesbians a rather new picture of the situation has emerged (Keuzenkamp 2006). In the first place, it is quite usual to be out, or have been outed, in the workplace. But this is on condition, in particular for gay men, that they should behave ‘normally’. This is a demand that both gay men and their straight colleagues voice. Almost all reject ‘nichten’ (sissies) which means in the Dutch context appearing effeminate and behaving in ways that are traditionally ‘unmasculine’, as well being oversexualized, e.g. by showing an interest in kinky or public sex. The general level of intolerance for homosexuality, which lies at 5 per cent for all Dutch, goes up to 45 per cent for those who claim to be offended by two kissing men in public (as opposed to 7 per cent affronted by a straight couple) – and probably more than this 45 per cent actually feel this, because the Dutch know to give politically correct answers. Many young queers still struggle for several years with their sexual preferences before coming out, as they feel that homosexuality remains a social problem. The acceptance of gays and lesbians has not changed the power dynamics between gay and straight citizens because heterosexuals continue to set the standards of behaviour: heteronormativity goes unchallenged. Most Dutch gays and lesbians are happy with their place at the table and do little to change the straight structure of society. They would also have a problem deciding where to begin. This means that young people, when they depart from sexual or gender norms, are at the mercy of straight worlds of families, schools and sports. As the sexual age of consent is set at 16 years, while kids come out as homosexual much earlier, these youngsters face a long period in which they have to survive in straight environments with little chance to get into contact with homosexual life. The gay movement, instead of contesting this high age of consent, supports it and helps young queers with being gay, but counsels them not to act upon their sexual preferences out of fear of being accused of

facilitating paedophiles. This confirms once more the obsolete Christian belief that being gay doesn't mean acting on it, continuing the archaic difference between identity and behaviour.

The situation is of course more complicated. Apart from the 'white' gays and lesbians there are those of immigrant background who participate in the gay world, have created their own organizations, and – a unique feature of the Amsterdam landscape – have had their own gay bar Habibi Ana (my beloved) since the day that imam El Moumni spoke out against same-sex marriage. They are the darlings of Dutch politics (right, left and liberal), and over the last few years have received a large share of the budget for gay emancipation because they are seen by the left as bridge between Dutch and immigrant cultures and by the extreme right as a thorn in the side of the Muslim community. The scattered information on their lives makes it clear that most of them face a difficult situation between the famous idea of Dutch tolerance and a home culture that often rejects gay and lesbian choices.

To the various concerns regarding homosexuality an old one was added in 2007. During Amsterdam's annual gay weekend at the beginning of August several gay men were beaten up. After this event, the media and politicians voiced a great anxiety both about the violence and about Amsterdam's reputation for being gay-tolerant. It resulted in a research project on the motives of queer bashers (Buijs et al. 2008).

The recent political concern regarding homosexual issues has had one positive result. There is nowadays a general feeling that pupils of secondary schools should be taught about homosexuality as a part of sex education. This aim is, however, difficult to put in practice given the pillarized structure of Dutch education, with Christian and Muslim schools being prone to refuse to disseminate such information, or adapt this teaching to their own interests. Teachers and headteachers of schools with a majority of new immigrant youngsters are often hesitant to provide comprehensive sex education because they are afraid of both parents' and pupils' reactions to lessons on homosexuality, and even on AIDS or masturbation. The new government, notwithstanding all its good intentions, was more eager to provide financial means to non-religious schools for religious education than to all schools to provide (homo)sexual education.

The concerns about homosexual emancipation felt by all political parties have led to a series of measures like sex education and to small investments in local emancipation efforts and in gay ethnic minority and sports organizations. Larger budgets aim to support gay and lesbian movements in Eastern Europe and the Global South. This financial support may help the gay and lesbian movement to organize itself, but it offers mainly short-term rather than long-term grants, and has little effect on the straight majority. The high priority given to homosexual emancipation in Dutch politics has

remained largely rhetorical and has done little to alter the straight structure of society.

The Drive for Sexual Equality

Another complication in Dutch sexual attitudes involves a drive for sexual equality that has gained importance since the 1950s all over the world. The theory of sexual desire has changed from the theory that opposites attract (man/woman; old/young; queen/trade or butch/femme) to an ideology that sexual relations should be between equals. Straight couples moved from a situation where the wife was supposed to be obedient to her husband to one where equality in class, education and power has become the norm. Gay men and lesbian women stopped having sex with 'heterosexuals' along the lines of queer with trade and butch with femme, and started rather to have relations among themselves, gay with gay and lesbian with lesbian (see Hekma 1992; Chauncey 1994). Straight sex became much easier once virginity stopped being a marital obligation for women and the pill dispensed with worries about pregnancies. Gay men (more than lesbians) got their own sexual cultures with saunas, bars, discos and dark rooms where they could find their equals – other homosexuals. In fact, homosexual relations can fulfill the new norm of equality much more easily than heterosexual ones (see Braun et al. 2003 for heteros). This drive for sexual equality, inspired by normative versions of socialism and feminism, helped the emancipation of adult homosexuality and paved the way for same-sex marriage but led on the other hand to the demonization of intergenerational sexuality, bestiality and prostitution (Hekma 2008). Sexual inequality has become unimaginable and in some cases even abject, even though it can be argued that the expectation of an absence of power dynamics in loving and erotic relations is simplistic and unrealistic (Sinfield 2004). The sexual model is becoming, as Don Kulick (2005) describes in the case of Sweden, the faithful and egalitarian couple, preferably straight: a strict gender dichotomy, with no promiscuity and no public sex, while kinky sex serves at best as foreplay and porn functions as stimulation where desire has become extinct. Gays and lesbians can be included at the margins as long as they behave 'normally'. Dutch politicians have suggested that sex education should teach pupils that sex and love belong together, suggesting monogamous couples as the norm. This emerging system is applauded both by the Dutch themselves and by foreigners (Giddens 1992 eulogizes what he calls 'pure relations'). The present system with a strengthening taboo on sexual inequalities and the eager promotion of monogamous couples is, according to the Dutch, the pinnacle of liberalism. This self-congratulatory complacency with their assumed sexual

freedoms is, given the growing number of laws and regulations governing sex, totally mistaken.

New Laws, Regulations and Concerns

This model of ideal sexual equality has legal and social consequences. Although prostitution was legalized in Holland in 2000, this did not have the desired effect of destigmatizing the profession. Rather, the opposite has happened. Sexwork remained abject because it is based in social inequalities. Since decriminalization, the animosity against the sex industry has grown. Accusations that it relies on criminal connections and on the abuse and trafficking of women have led to the closure of large parts of the more visible segments of the sex industry. Thus the *'tippelzone'* (a police-controlled space in an industrial area where women were allowed to street-walk) was closed in both Amsterdam and Rotterdam and the former decided to restrict its famous Red Light District and reinforce its boundaries. The decision was based purely on prejudice as the city authorities did not come up with much proof of the alleged evils or crimes, and did not explain why the police were not already regularly prosecuting the criminal offenses. Nor was it explained why criminality in some parts of the industry should justify measures against all of it. The move was even more surprising given that the sex industry is one of the big tourist attractions of the city, and a symbol of Amsterdam's status as an international city of sexual freedom. The city appears to promote emancipation when it comes to ethnic integration, but apparently does not extend this to sexual freedom.

The list of legal-sexual concerns has become much longer since a 'nuclear family cabinet', consisting of two Christian parties and Labour, held power from 2007 to 2010. The minister of Justice has criminalized virtual child pornography and grooming (assuming a false identity to persuade minors to undress for a webcam) and intended to set the age of consent for engaging in pornography and prostitution at 21 or even 23, instead of 18 years. (In 2002 the age of consent for non-venal sex went up from 12 to 16 and for paid sex from 16 to 18 years). He requested stricter regulation for brothels and stiffer penalties in cases of child pornography. In the past it was illegal to produce or sell the latter; now it has become illegal to possess or even look at it. While in the past, production of such pornography was forbidden because it was assumed it would necessitate child abuse, the reason now given is that such porn *leads to* the sexual abuse of children – thus creating much broader definitions of what child porn is. New laws forbid sex with animals, although there already was a law forbidding cruelty towards animals. The main reason given is the opinion of the Dutch that such behaviour is perverted – and much worse apparently than the mass murder of animals for the meat industry. Bestial porn is forbidden

along with bestiality because of its excesses that are in fact already illegal.⁴ In these cases, the concern is not abuse, but sexual libertarianism that is now seen as unacceptable and as not fitting the ideals of conservatives.

Another concern that led to a broad debate in the media was the presumed pornification or oversexualization of society in particular on the streets and in the media. The discussion started with an oversized billboard representation of a woman in a small bikini, an underwear advertisement. This was seen as offensive to women and detrimental for girls. Although no measures were taken, the debate continued, focusing in particular on the representation of female dancers as sexualized in appearance and submissive to male musicians in pop clips on MTV and other channels. Explicit sexual imagery on television had already been relegated to late evening broadcast. Grooming; young girls offering sex in exchange for drink, clothing or a dinner; and women undergoing surgical operations to enhance their facial or vaginal beauties were other concerns. When the Labour minister of Education published a report on women's emancipation, it included a chapter on this topic of oversexualization. The term was not defined and no data on the topic was produced; it was simply assumed that there is too much sex in society. The main concern is its negative influence on girls. No questions were asked about in which fields there would be too much or too little sex, or what would be the right amount. It is apparent that there is too little focus on sex in education, as the pillarization along religious lines has created far more attention to religious than to sexual themes. But how do these compare in content and in their influence on children? Such questions were rarely raised in the debate on pornification.

An ongoing issue, about which opinion remains divided, concerns gay cruising areas. Since the early 1980s most urban authorities responsible for parks have allowed these areas to operate in the interests of closeted gay men who had few other options. The state authority responsible for highways often took the opposite view, closing down those that were too gay-active, or cutting down the shrubs to put an end to these brushwood encounters. Complaints from citizens often led to closing down such gay spaces. Recently an Amsterdam liberal-right city council member proposed, among other pro-gay policies, to protect queers and to promote safe sex in cruising areas. He was silenced by his party on this issue. The outcome of these debates is predictable. The popular opposition, using the arguments that straight people have no cruising areas and that gay

4 Iacub and Maniglier (2005) point out that five times more men are in prison for sex crimes in France and the USA since the early 1970s because of stiffer penalties, more laws and broader definitions of sex – and the number of prisoners also went up in this period. So the dream of more freedom suggested by the sexual revolution is in fact reversed. The Dutch situation is less extreme, but probably goes in the same direction of producing a growing number of sex criminals.

people can now marry or have sufficient saunas and dark rooms, will win and gay cruising will be outlawed. These same straight people will oppose straight cruising (that is, of course, as widespread as the gay version, but for obvious reasons less concentrated) and will seek to limit the red light districts where heterosexual men do similar things that gays do in their sexual venues. Another significant factor in the opposition to gay cruising is the growing importance accorded to the faithful couple, as discussed above.

What do all these discussions and concerns mean for Dutch adult sexual life? The most recent survey indicates that 80 per cent of Dutch citizens are in a monogamous relationship, and half of these 80 per cent are not happy with it. 20 per cent have physical and another 20 per cent mental problems that require specialist help (Bakker and Vanwesenbeeck 2007). The ideology of serial monogamy remains the norm for most people, which makes experimenting with variant forms of sexual pleasure outside primary relationships highly unlikely. There are only a few spaces for sexual innovation apart from the bedroom – the best examples would be sex parties that are mainly organized for kinky gay men, and to a lesser extent for people of other orientations and preferences. Oral and anal sex is the furthest most Dutch claim to go, with pornography and sex toys being used to spice up the sex-life of the couple.

For many years now more and more emphasis has been placed on the idea of Dutch citizenship. This has led to citizenship lessons, to the creation of a national museum for Dutch history, to a series of ‘windows’ on Dutch history that would be taught to all students, and to a stronger feeling of what it means to ‘be Dutch’. Immigration has become more restricted and immigrants have to pass an examination on Dutch language and society before they are allowed to enter the country.⁵ The idea that we Dutch are so tolerant of gays and lesbians, and support sexual diversity, has also become a part of our national identity. Queerly, the lessons for new immigrants make clear that you have to respect kissing and marrying homosexuals, and also female nudism, while nearly half of the Dutch population itself rejects gay men kissing in public. The Dutch seem to have problems with their own ideals of sexual tolerance. With the focus on citizenship lessons, it has been suggested that sexual and gender diversity be included in this education because youngsters should not be pressured into a heteronormative straitjacket. It has also been suggested that diversity tests should be created to combat straight, white and male norms in political, educational, sport and other institutions (Keuzenkamp 2006; Buijs 2008). The aim is that everyone can feel that they belong. But few concrete measures were taken to realize this.

5 The controversial documentary *Naar Nederland* (2006) offers the information on this.

In Conclusion

There is no doubt that gays and lesbians are getting a marginal place at the table in a resolutely heteronormative Netherlands. As long as LGBs behave ‘normally’ and remain quiet, they will be defended by the ‘white’ Dutch from right to left. Society has become pro-gay. Unknown numbers of queers will continue their less respected sexual and critical practices. The pressure on ‘deviant’ homo- and heterosexual practices is growing both from the ‘white’ majority that sees its own sexual ideology as normative and from ethnic minorities that coalesce with the old Dutch on sexual and gender norms. The dichotomy of male and female, foundational for the operations of the straight mind, goes unquestioned among both groups that also support ideas of monogamy, the confluence of love and sex, and sexual privacy.

While the ‘normal’ gays and lesbians who create their own little families of choice are always more accepted – and, indeed, may become the standard, as they are more demonstrably ‘equal’ than their heterosexual compatriots – the kinky and promiscuous queers may become ever more marginalized. The queer culture of the 1970s that separated sex and love, promoted erotic diversity, and engaged in public sex, might be a sexual system that suits most people better because queers regarded sex and love as different emotions that often go in opposite directions (see Warner 1999; Moore 2004). Sexual pleasure often depends on moments and situations while love is rather about growing intimacy and mutual knowledge. But the sexual trend goes in an opposite puritanical direction, not only for queers but also for those people who embody sexual diversity. Dutch society may have become pro-gay, but unless you are in a monogamous couple, it is also becoming more anti-sexual. Dutch sexual liberalism, in short, has a very limited range.

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Chapter 10

Queer in the Nordic Region: Telling Queer (Feminist) Stories

Ulrika Dahl

Introduction: Mapping (Queer) Scandinavia¹

In the preface to a special issue of the *Journal of Homosexuality*, entitled *Scandinavian Homosexualities: Essays on Gay and Lesbian Studies*, journal editor Ken Plummer presents a familiar narrative: ‘Nordic culture – stretching through Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Iceland – has long been renowned for a more benign and humane approach to sexual diversities’, especially, he notes, when ‘compared to most of Europe and North America’ (Löfström 1998: xiii). Issue editor Jan Löfström also defines a ‘Nordic region’ largely in contrast to Europe and America. While Löfström ‘does not mean to deny that there are social and cultural distinctions *between* the Nordic countries’ (Löfström: 2) [own italics], he identifies some distinct features of ‘Nordic’ regional sexuality politics. Not untypically, he highlights the progressive gender politics of Nordic welfare states and the concept, familiar (to gender studies scholars at least), of a strong ‘state feminism’. These, Löfström contends, help explain the allegedly progressive (if assimilationist) gay and lesbian rights politics in the region, including legal recognition of same-sex partnerships in Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

Ten years later, in an article in the journal *Sexualities* entitled ‘Legalizing love in a cold climate’ Jens Rydström offers answers to a comparable question: ‘why was it Scandinavian countries that were the first to create a special law

1 I feel privileged that I for the past eight years have been part of a large network of queer scholars and activists with various forms of belonging in the Nordic region and, importantly with different genealogies of queer. Here I thank in particular Mathias Danbolt and Tiina Rosenberg for conversations and feedback. Research for this chapter was conducted within the project ‘A Joint Canon? Transitions and Translations in Nordic women’s/gender studies’ funded by the Baltic Sea Foundation. Many ideas here have emerged from creative collaboration with project colleagues Ulla Manns and Marianne Liljeström. The chapter was drafted while in STINT-funded residence as a research fellow at the Somatechnics research centre at Macquarie University in Sydney and I thank Nikki Sullivan and Sam Murray for stimulating discussions. Above all, I thank Lisa Downing and Robert Gillett for their editorial excellence and encouragement.

that regulated gay and lesbian relationships?’ (2008: 195). Like Plummer and Löffström he invokes familiar images regarding climate and welfare states as ‘people’s homes’. Using ‘Scandinavia’ and ‘the Nordic countries’ interchangeably, Rydström simultaneously defines the region in geopolitical terms, as comprising ‘all members in the Nordic council’ (2008: 216).

Noting that ‘the Swedish homosexual cohabitation law was the first in the world that legally recognized a relationship between same-sex partners’ (2008: 197), Rydström traces a history of gay rights activism outlining the legislative struggles in the Nordic nation states and sovereign areas. He compares the effects of the AIDS epidemic and its relationship to queer on both legislation and gay and lesbian activism in the Nordic region with the developments in the US. He suggests that same-sex partnership legislation has done the work of ‘spreading the concept of homosexuality’ throughout the Scandinavian countries, particularly in rural areas, as even the smallest municipality now has to acknowledge homosexuals’ rights to marry (Rydström 2008: 201). Yet while accordingly stressing the progressiveness of Nordic welfare states, Rydström also notes that ‘it is certainly true that the increasing integration of gays and lesbians in Scandinavian society has happened simultaneously with increasing segregation along the lines of ethnicity and religion’ (Rydström 2008: 214). Implicitly Rydström reminds us that even though it is rarely explicitly stated as such, in stories of Scandinavian gays and lesbians, ‘Nordic’ often has racialized connotations and that, even if unintentionally, the proper (queer) subjects of this cold climate region are, first and foremost, white and of Scandinavian origin.

While this chapter is concerned with *queer* rather than ‘homosexuality’, and while marriage legislation is hardly what we associate with queer, I begin with *Scandinavian Homosexualities* and Rydström’s work because they have an explicit and distinct ‘Nordic’ framework and thus exemplify what commonly counts as ‘Nordic’ regional features in comparative contexts. Pointing to the common conflation of ‘Scandinavian’ and ‘Nordic’ as names for this region,² they also reveal how, beyond its historical constructedness, a ‘regional’ focus in fact often entails a set of *national* (historical or contemporary) examples or case studies, cast in intra-regional and international comparative frameworks. These

2 In a footnote, Rydström writes that: ‘The term Scandinavia is sometimes understood to cover only Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. In Scandinavian languages, the term *Norden* ... or “the Nordic countries” is preferred, designating the members of the Nordic Council. In this article, “Scandinavia” and “the Nordic countries” will be used interchangeably, designating all members in the Nordic council, namely the sovereign states of Denmark, Norway, Finland, Iceland, and Sweden, as well as the autonomous areas of the Faeroes and Greenland, which are parts of the Danish kingdom, and Åland, which is an autonomous part of the Finnish Republic’ (2008: 216).

narratives, like many others in this genre (Berg and Wickman 2010, Von der Fehr et al. 1998) thus pivot on stereotypical regional features that I argue are the effect of generalizations, often specifically addressed to an ‘outside’ (English-reading) audience. After all, when talking about the Nordic region we could also note that it consists of a cluster of nations whose relations are marked by complex and historically specific power dynamics. Through a post-colonial lens we might attend not only to its alleged lack of a colonial past, but to the effects of hundreds of years of regional imperialism, including Sweden’s rule over Norway and colonization of Finland – the reason why ‘Scandinavian’ (shorthand for Swedish-Danish-Norwegian) is still assumed to be a language shared by Finns as well. This might shed a different light both on the naturalized assumptions about regional collaboration (Manns 2010) and on the literal and symbolic centrality of Sweden. And in the light of shifting populations (more than a million people in Sweden have Swedish as their second language) queers might also ask who the alleged ‘gays and lesbians’ in this supposedly homogeneous region really are and what they share, aside from comparatively progressive reproductive and partnership rights.

It is commonplace, not only in the Nordic context, to argue that queer itself has North American (academic) origins and as such, is an ‘immigrant’ vested with the power of Anglo-American imperialism and in need of ‘nationalization’ through translation. Since 1996 a significant number of introductory texts on queer theory have been published in the region and in Sweden in particular. These introductions, aimed at a Scandinavian-reading audience, both introduce and reflect broader debates in the development of the transnational field of queer studies. A summary of such Scandinavian texts would suggest that in this region queer has simultaneously introduced, replaced, and merged with gay and lesbian studies (Rosenberg 2002, 2008), has produced and deconstructed identity categories (Ambjörnsson 2006, Rosenberg 2008) and has challenged and affirmed the position of feminism (e.g. Laskar 1996, Rosenberg 2008, Kulick 2005, Berg and Wickman 2010). Above all, these stories say, queer has denaturalized heterosexuality (Kulick 1996, Annfelt et al. 2007, Rosenberg 2009). And the concept of heteronormativity – now commonly used in broader public debates – is often presented as the ‘key contribution’ of queer theory.

Among activist networks and in subcultural formations (Ambjörnsson 2006, Olovsson-Lööv 2008, Rosenberg 2006, 2008, Berg and Wickman 2010), queer has become synonymous with gender transgression and public displays of non-normative sexuality and, in some cases, trans* issues. It has generated a shift in the focus of some LGBT organizations and recently much (queer) grass-roots work has been concerned with ‘norm criticism’, primarily around gender and sexuality in education, work and policy. Some suggest that in Sweden queer has become almost too popular and depoliticized (Ambjörnsson 2006, Kulick 2005), whereas in Finland it is argued that it remains marginalized

(Juvonen and Hekanaho 2008). Agnes Bolsø (2008) contends that, in Norway, queer's allegedly anti-assimilationist approach is at odds with national gay and lesbian political agendas that focus on the rights of homosexuals to marry, breed, consume and practice religion. And, in Denmark, activist academics propose that queer has arrived rather 'late' (Mertz 2008, Danholt, personal communication). In the current neoliberal order, queer is at times tied to leftist politics (Rosenberg 2009, Nielsen 2010) and other times to liberal ideas of individual self-definition and power. Of particular concern in this chapter are those narratives that propose the existence of a particular form of 'queer feminism' that is distinctly Nordic, if not Swedish.

Whether a success story or one of marginalization, queer is by now sufficiently recognized in the academy that it is possible to take some stock of what, using Clare Hemmings's (2005) terminology, I call 'telling queer stories'. The queer approach I am deploying here calls into question the normative tendency to take nations or regions as given points of departure and instead examines how geopolitical categories are used and naturalized in the telling of queer stories. Inspired by Nikki Sullivan's (2004: 1) argument that 'regionality, as a categorising logic that makes meaning and identity possible, does so in and through the instituting of boundaries', and in keeping with the specific task of the present book, I am concerned with the broader implications of the territorialization of ideas and strategies.

Stories of Queer (Nations)

The first introduction to queer theory published in Swedish actually appeared two years before *Scandinavian Homosexualities*. While the production time frame for the two volumes was probably the same, this is interesting given that queer is popularly said to arrive 'after', or in critique of, gay and lesbian identity politics. In a 1996 special issue of the Nordic journal *Lambda Nordica* entitled 'Queer Theory: What is it and what is it good for?', editor Don Kulick notes that, at that time, queer theory had not been much discussed in Sweden and Scandinavia (1996: 5), even though there had been great interest in it at a first conference on research about homosexuality held in 1995. The place of publication is symbolic insofar as it reflects the tensions and overlaps between LGBT and queer studies. Although *Lambda Nordica*³ has explicitly decided *not* to use the term queer in its subtitle, and while some argue that no organized form of Nordic LGBT studies has ever existed (Rosenberg 2009: 102), *Lambda Nordica* has been one central nexus of Nordic networks and conversations in both gay and lesbian and queer studies since 1989.

3 Available at: <http://www.lambdanordica.se>.

Kulick's special issue, featuring scholars based in Sweden, grew out of a queer theory seminar at Stockholm University of which Kulick was a founding member. To this day it serves as a central queer space bringing together scholars, students and activists.⁴ With the issue, Kulick and his colleagues placed Stockholm at the centre of Nordic queer studies, imbuing it with a distinctly American genealogy, embodied in Kulick's own route between New York and Stockholm. Along with the editor, the contributors to this issue have since become key queer scholars in Sweden and Scandinavia.

The issue aimed to be of use both for gender studies scholars and for activists, Kulick's translation aspires to be 'pedagogical and explanatory'⁵ (1996: 5) because, as he puts it, 'the majority of texts considered to be the core of queer theory are written in a way that is difficult to read' (Kulick 1996). Kulick gives considerable space to discussing the concept itself, pointing to the ongoing debate about the (un)translatability of the term queer and the implications of this (see Mizielinska 2006, Rosenberg 2008). He begins by locating and outlining the activist origins of queer, commonly attributed to Act Up and Queer Nation in the US. This is a model that is commonly described as 'confrontational' and that has since at times been presented as the antithesis of the alleged Scandinavian model of politics, which is described as 'consensus-oriented' and conflict-avoiding (Ambjörnsson 2006, Rydström 2004: 175).

Given the contemporary state of queer theory within gender studies and the links between queer and feminist studies in particular, it is notable that this often-read introduction does not mention the work of Judith Butler at all, but rather locates queer's theoretical roots in the works of Foucault, Derrida and Lacan. Drawing on Jonathan Katz, and laying the groundwork for the heavy emphasis on critiques of heteronormativity that have come to comprise a core of queer work (Annfelt et al. 2007, Kulick 2005), Kulick emphasizes deconstruction of the alleged naturalness of heterosexuality, using the same image of the (white) heterosexual couple as Michael Warner in *Fear of a Queer Planet* (1993: xxii, Kulick 1996: 12).

In contrast to Kulick, the genealogy presented in Pia Laskar's contribution, while it makes no reference to Butler either, sees similarities between queer and radical lesbian feminism. Pointing to the work of Adrienne Rich and Monique Wittig, lesbian and social movement activism, Laskar offers an alternative (feminist) trajectory of queer that has often been taken up since (see Rosenberg 2001, 2006, 2008, Ambjörnsson 2006, Laskar 2003, Hallgren 2008). To Laskar's mind, the main tensions between the two arise around theories of the subject. (Is there a shared experience of oppression among women and/

4 Indeed, Mathias Danbolt (via personal communication) attributes the relatively slow development of queer theory in Denmark to the absence of such a seminar.

5 All translations from Swedish are mine.

or homosexuals, and is that necessary for common political projects?). Also at issue are theories of power. Laskar argues that feminists are less willing to ignore the structural asymmetries of gender and to embrace liberal ideas of sexual freedom embedded in some queer accounts. Rather they tend to believe in protective legal frameworks (Laskar 1996: 76–7).

Explaining queer's central focus on anti-identity politics, Kulick's introduction concludes by speculating on the future of queer theory in Sweden. He notes that while lesbian and gay studies had been in existence in North America, Australia and around Europe for some time, by the mid-1990s there was still not a single course or position within this field in Sweden.⁶ He also argues that Swedish research foundations and universities at that point were 'regrettably slow and conservative when it comes to supporting research on homosexuality' (1996: 20). A few years after this publication, Kulick himself was to head a large four-year research project entitled 'Heteronormativity: An interdisciplinary ethnographic study', which was groundbreaking both in scale and scope, and produced several widely circulated doctoral dissertations and a large edited volume on queer research produced by scholars located in Sweden (Kulick 2005: 21).

The affinities and tensions between queer and feminism outlined by Laskar became heightened in the early 2000s,⁷ after the publication of the book *Queer Feminist Agenda* in 2002 and a resurgence of activism under that name. In that book, Tiina Rosenberg crafts a particular genealogy of queer, to which a critique of heteronormativity is central, and which uses theoretical concepts drawn from what she calls 'Butlerism' and from lesbian feminist theory (Rosenberg 2002). Rosenberg notes that the history of queer is 'short and American' (2002: 64) but she also stresses that it draws mostly on 'European' philosophical traditions, even if many of these have reached a broader Swedish (if not Scandinavian) audience via 'American' interpretations. Insisting that the ideas generally associated with queer were not 'invented' by the Americans (2002: 64), Rosenberg points to, and troubles, the territorialization of ideas, in this case, the Americanization of 'continental' ones. At the same time, Rosenberg too recounts queer's American origin story.

6 As Rosenberg (2008: 11) importantly notes, the institutional framework for LGBTQI studies, even in English-speaking academia, has largely been in gender/women's studies and the number of actual gay and lesbian studies positions or departments is not as large as these kinds of comparative narratives sometimes make them appear.

7 Regrettably, especially since I was part of queer feminist organizing in Stockholm in the early 2000s, space limitations prevent me from accounting for these activist tensions in detail. For discussions about Swedish queer feminist controversies, see Ambjörnsson (2006), Rosenberg (2006), Ryberg (2004), among others.

To Rosenberg, queer feminism rejects both the gender claustrophobia of radical feminist separatism and the heterosexism of mainstream feminism (2002: 20, see also Ambjörnsson 2006: 179). Curiously, Rosenberg's account of queer origins is also gendered in very particular ways. She cheekily proposes that 'lesbian feminists are the brain behind queer theory and offer the sophisticated theoretical body, and feminine-identified gay men, *queens*, offer the entertainment, irony and also the empathy' (2002: 21), thus presenting herself and queer feminism as unconcerned with queer femininities.⁸ Using the 'queer feminist' agenda, Rosenberg and others, myself included, have argued for coalitions rather than a shared experience (of reproductive motherhood).

In 2005, Kulick again introduces the field of queer theory to a Swedish-reading audience with the anthology *QueerSverige*, adorned with a picture of a white, seemingly heterosexual couple in front of a house in a yard with a Swedish flag, and in which a significant number of the contributions (my own included) were critiques of heteronormativity. As the title suggests, the framework is distinctly national both in terms of the location of researchers and, in particular, of the empirical work presented. Once again the introduction tells the story of Kulick's own discovery of queer in New York and he states that his aim with the volume was to show how queer theory can be applied to explicitly Swedish materials. Kulick also points out that few of the articles make reference to what he calls the 'star' of queer theory, Judith Butler, which he argues is evidence of how queer theory had matured (2005: 13).

Reflecting on what has happened since his previous introduction, Kulick highlights the idea of 'queer feminism'. He argues that it is an activist and scholarly practice unique to Sweden and the explanation for this, he contends, is that in Sweden the origins of queer theory are traced to feminist critiques of heterosexuality which develop an emphasis on gender, rather than sexual, politics (see also Rosenberg 2008). Kulick argues that queer has simply become established as a form of feminism (see also Ambjörnsson 2006), which in turn is attributed to the place of queer in the relatively institutionalized field of gender studies and feminist popular culture in Sweden.

To Kulick, 'Swedish queer feminism' is incompatible with the 'sex radical' origins of queer and he finds it problematic that the dimensions of queer theory that he sees as less compatible with feminist politics have been ignored. In particular he highlights the contention that commercial sex and sadomasochism

8 As my current project on queer femme-ininities argues, within Nordic gender studies, female masculinities (Rosenberg 2001) and drag, particularly 'conventional' kings and queens (Olovsdotter-Lööv and Westerling 2008) have until recently attracted more interest than (queer) femininities more broadly. As I outline further in an expanded version of this chapter (Dahl, forthcoming), queer genealogies and origin stories are of central importance in explaining this trajectory.

are not inherently oppressive to women, but rather challenge heteronormative assumptions about sex as synonymous with love. His own contribution concerns the status of the john, the buyer of sexual services, in a Sweden where such transactions are prohibited by law. Drawing on Foucault's discussion of the homosexual and his case history, Kulick argues that the john is a 'pervert', possibly the most stigmatized of all, in contemporary Sweden. Here Kulick's somewhat polemical analysis appears simultaneously to lament the lack of a radical, queer male culture and theory, and to critique 'Swedish' feminism on the grounds of its relationship to a distinctly Swedish legacy of national morality and welfare state politics.

If the heavy emphasis on Butler's theories of gender rather than the more liberal theories of gender and sexuality commonly associated with certain (American) gay male authors is what characterizes 'queer feminist' work in Sweden, historian Sara Edenheim (2008) takes a different approach to the genealogy. While the implications of Butler's (1990) classic *Gender Trouble* for the very premise of feminist work were discussed early on in Swedish and Nordic journals (Liljeström 1990), Edenheim argues that Butler's work has figured in the Swedish debate about sex and gender, initiated in 1988 by historian Yvonne Hirdman, in a very particular way. She notes that throughout the 1990s, Butler's work was read largely as an extension of Marxist radical feminism, as radical constructivist, and as politically idealistic (2008: 150). This reading, she contends, has gradually given way to 'a concept of gender that got associated with a liberal research field and with an implicit distancing from Marxist and feminist fields' (Edenheim 2008: 162). This also involved leaving materiality and desire behind. Edenheim provocatively asks 'how come Butler is almost single-handedly the person associated with queer theory in Sweden when most queer theorists seem to have introduced, discussed and developed this theory in Sweden without any real application or specific discussion of important parts of her theory?' (2008: 155). Edenheim argues that Butler has been misleadingly translated and contends that there is a 'Rosenbergian paradigm in which the theatre metaphor has been interpreted literally' (Edenheim 2008: 159).

In 2006, Don Kulick and Tiina Rosenberg were given an award by the National Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU) for being 'trailblazers of queer theory' and putting sexual politics on the public agenda,⁹ which points to the effects of queer work within larger Swedish debates on gender and sexuality. Despite their divergent genealogies, then, in ten years Kulick and Rosenberg, along with their students and a larger queer studies community, have created a kind of queer Sweden. If Kulick and Rosenberg give accounts of the paradoxical 'success' of queer in Sweden within and beyond feminist activism

9 Available at: <http://www.rfsu.se/sv/Om-RFSU/RFSU-priset/2006-Tiina-Rosenberg-och-Don-Kulick/> [accessed: 2 March 2010].

and theory, these are indeed accompanied among other things by debates about genealogies and translations.

In 2006 Fanny Ambjörnsson, former student and colleague of Kulick and Rosenberg published *Vad är Queer* (What is Queer?) in a series of introductory books. In many respects she tells the same story of the North American development of queer as Kulick, but her genealogy remains closer to feminist origins and emphasizes a queer feminist politics. Ambjörnsson's approach is explicitly intersectional and she argues that movements for social change other than lesbian and gay liberation movements, including feminism and civil rights movements, have been central to queer's development. She also points to critiques of white gay maleness within US queer politics by, among others, feminists of colour. Ambjörnsson's approach is a localized one; she largely draws on empirical work from her own research and that of colleagues in queer studies to illustrate her points. Like Rosenberg's (2006) work on lesbians, her discussion of activism draws primarily on Swedish examples and she argues that, unlike in the US, in Sweden queer can hardly be understood as a 'gay male project' (2006: 184–90). Like Laskar before her, Ambjörnsson is willing to see parallels between feminist and queer projects, particularly around understanding the complex matrix of power through which gender remains a hegemonic category. Thus, Ambjörnsson, like other 'queer feminists' stresses the complex theoretical and activist analyses that extend her analysis and understanding of queer into critiques of other norm-generating relations of power, while nonetheless remaining enclosed within primarily national frameworks.

In contrast to these genealogical accounts, Finnish queer scholars Tuula Juvonen and Pia Livia Hekanaho (2008) take a distinct institutional and structural approach to the situation of queer in Finland. There, they argue, gay and lesbian studies organically gave way to queer studies without tension, but – following large-scale academic restructuring – funding and security have become increasingly scarce. While women's studies have given institutional refuge to women researchers and other 'undesirables' dealing with queer topics (2008: 4), queer research lives under constant threat of marginalization. In particular, and again in contrast to the US, which they claim is dominated by male scholars, they note that the 2000s have seen 'the total disappearance of male scholars from queer studies' in Finland, through what they describe as universities' 'queer SCUM politics'. In a national framework, they argue that when gay male scholars die, stop doing queer research, or move to institutions abroad, it has devastating consequences in 'a small country like Finland' (Juvonen and Hekanaho 2008: 3). Their account seems to confirm Kulick's implicit position; that in contrast to narratives about Queer America, where 'white gay males' are often seen to dominate the field, the true marginalized subject of queer studies in Sweden and other Nordic national contexts, is indeed the (gay) male. Given queer's alleged focus on deconstructing binary gender and identity categories, the continued

emphasis on the difference between gay men and feminist lesbians when it comes to both scholarship and activism is noteworthy. Indeed, it seems that queer both invents and challenges identity politics, even in narratives about its own genesis and development. Why these narratives give the impression that ‘gay men’ (as a strangely homogenous category) are seemingly less creative, politically and theoretically, than lesbian and queer feminists, is a subject for another article.

The Nordic Revisited

As we have seen here, a central issue around which much debate about queer in the Nordic context pivots is the identity of an alleged ‘progressive’ region with regard to gender and sexual politics. Like *Lambda Nordica*, the online Nordic magazine *Triksster*, launched in 2008, has provided an important and distinctly ‘Nordic’ space for publication and dissemination of scholarly work. But unlike the former, *Triksster* (www.trickster.net) presents itself as distinctly queer. As with *Lambda Nordica* the publishing languages are English and Scandinavian and it aims to bring together artists, activists and scholars and to invite genre-transgressing work. The two editors, Mathias Danbolt and Fredrik Langeland belong to what might be called a new generation for whom queer studies is an established field, and for whom the theoretical and practical connections between activism and scholarship form an evident point of departure. With the first issue, *Triksster* launched ‘Queer Norden?’ as one of its themes, noting that in the past 15 years queer has become an ‘acknowledged academic perspective in many Nordic universities’,¹⁰ and inviting ‘academics, activists, and artists’ to discuss ‘what queer has done, does, and can do in the Nordic countries’.¹¹ The journal’s approach is both affirmative and critical; the series aims simultaneously to call the alleged progressiveness of liberal Nordic societies into question and to investigate the ‘function’ of queer within both mainstream society and LGBT identity politics.¹² So far, the journal has included reports, reviews, debate articles and scholarly discussions on the state of queer activism within the Nordic nation states. However, most of the empirical work presented in *Triksster* to date invokes national frameworks and concerns nation-based examples of activism. Above all, it always traces academic and activist genealogies and strategies back to US origins. It remains to be seen whether this is an arena where the Nordic will become something more than a cluster

10 Available at: <http://trikster.net/themes/queernorden.html> [accessed: 1 March 2010].

11 Available at: <http://trikster.net/1/editorial/english.html> [accessed: 1 March 2010].

12 Available at: <http://trikster.net/themes/queernorden.html> [accessed: 1 March 2010].

of nations and where queer will be more than the invocation of a particular and implicitly national(ist) legacy of Queer Nation.

The last example in this chapter, and the most recent introduction to queer theory, emerged in 2010 and, perhaps due to its authors' locations in Sweden and Finland, chose a distinct 'Nordic' frame for its discussion of politics, culture and theory. In *Queer* Martin Berg and Jan Wickman tell a story (here presented distinctly for the social sciences readership), whereby queer, though largely concerned with gender and sexuality, can be combined with other frameworks, such as postcolonial ones, for an 'intersectional' analysis. Like Löffström (1998), they present 'the Nordic model' for welfare and feminism as the background (2010: 92), and centre the discussion on a comparison with US politics and academia, whereby 'Nordic' activism is presented as 'less confrontational', the 'enemy' as less 'fundamentalist', Nordic societies as 'smaller' and the AIDS crisis as less urgent than in the US (2010: 92–6, see also Ambjörnsson 2006). Casting a distinctly retrospective light on two decades of queer theory and politics, this book also reflects on the central position of Swedish publications and politics within the (never specified) Nordic context and insists that 'what characterizes queer in Sweden more than anything else, even in Nordic comparison, is its special emphasis on its connection to feminism' (2010: 104). Echoing Kulick's (2005) and Ambjörnsson's (2006) introductory texts, but taking a middle position between what they see as Kulick's somewhat critical position and Ambjörnsson's more positive one, Berg and Wickman's intra-regional comparison thus (again) presents Sweden as the jewel of the Queer Nordic crown.

Telling Stories of Queer Origin-ality

In this chapter I have taken inspiration from Hemmings's (2005) analyses of the recent feminist past and attended to the telling of queer stories, largely because I argue that introductory texts are a central feature of the establishment and reproduction of both LGBT and queer studies as (trans/national) fields of scholarly and activist knowledge. Following Hemmings, I argue that despite the insistence on the diversity of theoretical roots and routes that make up queer, the story told in such texts is strangely singular and seemingly cast in terms of either (feminist) progress or (queer) loss. Above all, it seems that ideas and their indebtedness to activism are often fixed in time and space.

Invariably, the telling of queer stories concerns the origin, ownership, citizenship and translatability of queer concepts. As Rosenberg has noted (2008: 1), there are multiple genealogies of queer but when ideas get territorialized there is a tendency to homogenize on the basis of presumed national unity. Despite the disagreements about what translation does (i.e. does queer 'work' if its history as an abject and reclaimed term has no linguistic 'meaning?'), as

a collective body, queer introductory texts all continue to centre on ‘American’ concepts and ideas, often through providing regional examples of activist strategies or through critical analyses of regional problems. In particular, the slogan of the US activists from Queer Nation ‘we are here, we are queer, get used to it’ is repeatedly credited with queer origin-ality by all authors (Kulick 1996: 6, Berg and Wickman 2010:17, Rosenberg 2002: 37, Ambjörnsson 2006: 13). Presented as an ‘in your face’ and ‘anti-assimilationist’ strategy, it also gets characterized as *the* approach of both activism and academic work and has become the yardstick against which ‘Nordic’ work is measured as ‘properly’ queer or not.

As feminist anthropologists Sylvia Yanagisako and Carol Delaney have argued, origin stories are ‘a prime locus for a society’s notion of itself – its worldview, and its social organization’ (1995: 2). Rather than evaluate the truth claims made by such stories, Yanagisako and Delaney argue that we should see them as representations that hold powerful institutions in place. Repeatedly returning to queer’s (American) origins, I argue, contributes to the social organization of (queer) knowledge. That is, it territorializes ideas and holds national(ist) comparative modes in place; it locates queer ‘outside’ of the national and regional body and subjects it to assimilation; and it reproduces academic power relations.

A key part of telling queer stories thus centres on how ‘we’ are different from ‘them’ and, as I have shown, the imagined ‘we’ in this case are those implicitly linguistically and culturally located in the region and ‘they’ are the Anglo-Americans who seemingly simultaneously colonize ‘our’ thinking and ignore what ‘we’ are doing (but for whom ‘we’ should write). As Joanna Mizielinska’s (2006: 93) analysis of the use of queer in Finland has importantly shown, there is a healthy scepticism towards embracing ‘American’ tools, concepts and challenges. While this is valid, we also need ask why there is such a need to territorialize concepts and nationalize scholars and why we rely on generalized accounts. The examples discussed here highlight how discussions about the meanings and implications of queer theory and activism are not only told through historical narratives that begin with the ‘global event’ of Stonewall in New York and its ripple effects across Western gay metropolises (Mizielinska 2006), they are also placed, as acts of translation, within particular, but unproblematized, geopolitical frameworks for both scholarly and activist projects of knowledge production.

In this chapter I have also sought to show how in the Nordic region, the telling of queer stories relies on a construction of the Nordic that is produced by invoking ‘family resemblances’ (Ahmed 2007), often tied to naturalized assumptions about shared cultural, historical, or political ‘traditions’ of nations and conflations between these levels. This runs the risk of placing both ideas and bodies that are not understood to be of Scandinavian ‘origin’ outside the

frame. Often, within feminist and queer conversations, it is argued that networks of 'Nordic' scholars emerge 'organically', that they share language, research questions, theoretical and methodological trajectories, *and* geopolitical location. As citizens of welfare states, who have a long history of close proximity, comparison and joint institutional support, there is also much that encourages such collaborations. But is it natural and self-evident? A queer critique of this move would involve pointing out the obvious reductionism of using the nation as a framework and would highlight issues of scale and relations of power forged through histories of military, economic and cultural imperialism. It might attend to how complex activist and academic strategies in different locales are tied to a particular circulation of both ideas and persons in and out of this region that reflect larger political economic effects of globalization in a postcolonial world.

In conclusion, here I have sought not only to tell a story about queer in the Nordic Region, but also to trouble what I see as a broader tendency within gender studies to territorialize both ideas and political movements; and to naturalize the nation state as 'the local' point of comparison. The task of such a deconstruction is, as queer theory teaches us, never to provide a corrective account, but rather to expose its very mechanisms. By reflecting on how we tell queer stories, and challenging the way that queer repeatedly traces its genesis back to a queer nation within a super power and to the place of queer theory within global academic restructuring, we can contribute to a shift in the terms of such storytelling. As Nina Lykke (2001) contends, unless we critically examine the content of regional and national identity categories – and, I would add, the stories we often reproduce – we run the risk of also reproducing their problematic and homogenizing content. In other words, rather than simply being here and being queer and getting used to it, we should continue to queer our conceptual and territorial maps of both scholarship and activism.

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Chapter 11

Queer in Poland: Under Construction

Łukasz Szulc

Gay men appeared in Poland for the first time in 1989, after the fall of Communism; lesbians always were – and still are – ‘just friends’; trans* people are funny freaks in the entertainment business; and queers ... but who are they, anyway? This set of clichés probably reflects accurately the general level of understanding about LGBTQ individuals in Polish society and, in some cases, within the Polish LGBTQ community itself.

Poland is a relatively homogeneous and largely conservative country. More than 90 per cent of Polish society shares one race, one nationality, one language and one religion. The influential Polish Roman Catholic Church guards conservative values in the social and political life of the Polish population, including a ban on abortion and support for homophobic politicians. But even then we are not all straight and certainly ‘we are not all homophobes’, in the words of one Polish academic, Agnieszka Graff (2006). Who is queer in Poland then? Where are the queers and how queer are they?

In this chapter, I attempt to answer these questions by describing how Polish LGBT individuals have acquired their common identity and politicized their status in the public sphere. I then show how some of them have tried to challenge identity discourse under the influence of queer theory, both practically, in the LGBT movement’s politics, and theoretically, at the universities. I am also going to present some recent debates on sex and sexuality in order to outline the general attitude towards human sexuality in Poland and to describe the politics of the groups that are most interested in it, including the Roman Catholic Church, politicians, LGBT activists and queer theorists.

Queers in Recent Polish History

Soviet Communist Dominance (1945–1989)

The communists’ special aversion to gay men, the formation of the first Polish informal gay and lesbian organizations in the 1980s and the emerging interest

in homosexuality within Polish academic discourse during the communist era all suggest that we should start our story about queers in Poland with this period. Before doing so, however, let's have a quick look back at one event of special importance, namely the decriminalization of sexual acts between men in Poland in the interwar period (1918–1939). In fact, homosexuality has never been considered a crime within the Polish legal system. It was the sodomy laws of Russia, Prussia and Austria which criminalized homosexuality in Polish territories, after the country lost its independence in 1795. The laws that were still in effect lost their real power when Poland regained its independence after the First World War. In a new Criminal Code, dated 1932, Poland officially decriminalized homosexuality, the first country in twentieth-century Europe to do so.¹ Unfortunately, this act was more a reflection on the contemporary Western European debate on the decriminalization of sexual acts between men and the Polish reluctance to accept the legislation of occupying forces than the mark of a real social acceptance of gay men or lesbians in Poland before the Second World War.

During communist times LGBTQ individuals remained invisible in Polish society, with a couple of exceptions when the press covered spicy criminal stories in which lesbians or gay men were involved. The Polish communist authorities were not especially concerned to regulate sexual minorities and neither forbade sexual acts between men (as in the Soviet Union)² nor felt the urge to combat intolerance and discrimination against LGBTQ individuals. They partly shared the standard communist view according to which gay men were perceived as feminine males who were weak and untrustworthy, and thus did not fit the image of a strong 'New Soviet man', while lesbians were thought to be masculine, that is strong and loyal. It is worth mentioning that while in the USA, during the McCarthy era, homosexual people were accused of siding with communists, gay men and lesbians in the Eastern Bloc, including Poland, were sometimes presented as traitors to the nation who collaborated with émigré circles in the West or with Western degenerates whose sexual promiscuity was incompatible with communist sexual morality.

In this context, we cannot be surprised that LGBTQ individuals did not seek attention in the public sphere during the communist rule in Poland. Some of them, especially gay men, used to meet secretly in public places such as bars, cafés or baths, which were then closed down as soon as it became known that they were gay meeting points. In the larger Polish cities gay men were also to be

1 A few European countries had already decriminalized homosexual acts in earlier centuries, e.g. France (1791), the Netherlands (1811), Belgium (1843), Italy (1890) and others.

2 The Soviet Union recriminalized gay men's sexual acts in 1933, imposing a penalty of six years' forced labour.

found in so-called ‘pikiety’: unofficial, often outdoor gathering places, known to the initiate, such as parks, streets, public toilets or railway stations, where men used to go to pick up other men. In some communities there was a set of secret signs that allowed gay men to recognize each other. An article on homosexual prostitution in Poland, published in 1963, informs us that such signs included walking with a red flower in a buttonhole, jingling a large bunch of keys or whistling a popular tune (Giza 1963). Still, it is hard to talk about any organized community of gay men or any other sexual minority group in Poland until the mid-1980s. As sociologist, Janusz Mucha (1997: 300), notes: ‘They [minority groups in communist Poland] rarely questioned in public the official worldview and rather tried to find a kind of niche for themselves’.

Around the mid-1950s Polish authorities as well as academics began to be more interested in LGBTQ people, again principally gay men rather than other groups. As they were used to dealing mainly with underground gay communities they conceived of them as a criminogenic group. During this period, we observe an increase in publications on sexual minorities, especially in the context of psychology, medicine or criminology, as well as an increased interest in gay community life by communist authorities. Interestingly, in the Polish communist Ministry of Internal Affairs, there was a special cell with handsome and attractive agents whose main task was to seduce straight and gay women or men of special interest to the regime so as to blackmail them and force them to collaborate with communist authorities (Kurpios 2002). Such provocation was a main reason why Michel Foucault left Poland in the late 1950s, when he was working for the French Institute in Warsaw. After being ‘caught up in a classic entrapment ploy – the “honey trap” ... he was advised by his ambassador that he would do well to leave Warsaw as quickly as possible’ (Macey 1993: 86–7).

1985 was a watershed year in the short history of Polish LGBT activism. In November of that year the police raided many bars, cafés, public baths and other places where gay men used to meet and detained lots of individuals who were kept for interrogation. Some of them were forced to sign a paper in which they had to admit to being homosexuals. The raid was part of an organized operation against actual and alleged homosexual people, code-named ‘Hyacinth’, which was launched by Polish communists in 1985 and continued until 1987. For a long time the authorities denied the occurrence of this operation which, in fact, has still not been fully examined to this day. HIV/AIDS prevention, allegedly high crime rates among gay men as well as an attempt to intimidate the emerging LGBT movement are thought to be the most important reasons for launching operation ‘Hyacinth’.

The operation resulted in the compilation of about 11,000 documents detailing the names and personal data of detained people. Some of the LGBTQ individuals concerned fled abroad; others withdrew even deeper into the closet.

Yet, as sometimes happens at times of mounting oppression, and as the example of the Stonewall riots serves to remind us, another result was that sexual minority groups united against their harassment and started building a sense of community and a shared gay/lesbian identity.³ After 1985, several gay and lesbian organizations were launched, if still illegally, and a couple of magazines for sexual minorities began to be published. Thus the traumatic police operation triggered the beginning of the organized Polish LGBT movement.

The Democratic Republic of Poland (1989–)

Shortly after the Round Table talks in 1989 between communist authorities and the Polish opposition led by Lech Walesa, Poland became a democratic country. The transition was marked by rapid social changes that dashed the socialist myth of a uniform Polish society. What Janusz Mucha (1997) calls new cultural minorities in the metaphorical sense emerged within Polish society. He defines these minorities as ‘the groups that had existed before but were kept or stayed voluntarily “in the closet”’ (Mucha 1997: 299) including the German community, the disabled, atheists or homosexuals.

Another interesting change, from a queer perspective, was the emergence of widespread pornography and sex businesses in Poland at the beginning of the 1990s, when communist censorship was no longer in place. Yet, as some Polish academics have noted, the rising pornography business tended to reflect ‘rampant heterosexism and exploitation of women’ rather than any growth in sexual freedom (Kitliński, Leszkowicz and Lockard 2005).

One of the results of social changes in the new Poland is that sex and sexuality have come to be discussed more frequently in the public sphere. These have become the subjects of serious political and public debates which have often polarized Polish society. This includes strident discussions on abortion, which resulted in the introduction of restrictive legislation in 1993⁴; disputes over the new Polish Constitution concerning the legal recognition of same-sex marriages (1995); two unsuccessful parliamentary attempts to ban both softcore and hardcore pornography (2000 and 2007); recent debates on the parameters of sex education (or ‘Education for family life’, as it is called) in Polish schools; and the question of the government’s possible subsidizing of in vitro fertilization.

3 The most significant difference between events that happened after the historic raids in the USA and Poland is that in the latter case the police operation was not followed by massive protests of LGBTQ people taking their fight to the streets.

4 Abortion is illegal in Poland unless the mother’s life or health is endangered, she became pregnant as a result of a criminal act or the foetus is seriously malformed.

In all these debates on sex and sexuality in Poland, the Roman Catholic Church has played an enormously influential role as the guardian of conservative values. To understand its very strong position in Polish society and politics we need to go back to the communist era when the authorities strongly opposed the Catholic religion in general and the Church in particular. While occasionally reaching a settlement with Church authorities, the communists usually expressed their hostility to it and persecuted individual priests, especially when they criticized the communist party or supported the Solidarity union, the country's main political opposition force.⁵ Thus the Church has been strongly profiled as a highly patriotic institution that opposes the communist system and always looks after Poles' best interests. The notion was much reinforced when the Polish cardinal Karol Wojtyła was elected to the Papacy in 1978, and subsequently preached his patriotic sermons during his pilgrimages to communist Poland. As a result, the victory of Solidarity in 1989 was also perceived, by most Poles, as a great victory for the Roman Catholic Church. Polish national identity has been inextricably linked with the Roman Catholic religion, and Pope John Paul II's teachings, which were particularly conservative with regard to sexuality, have been accepted without question. Only more recently has the Church begun to face serious rational-secular critiques that have resulted in a decline in the institution's popularity, especially among younger Poles.

Simultaneously, as Mucha (1997) notes, from the beginning of the 1990s a sexual minorities movement started to organize itself professionally and made its first attempts at taking its issues to the public. We cannot compare this movement's voice, very weak in the early 1990s and still not strong even today, to the voice of such a highly structured and strongly supported institution as the Polish Catholic Church. Still, for present purposes it is worth introducing a brief survey of where the Polish professional LGBT movement originated and how it has attempted to question common conservative ideas about sexuality.

As mentioned earlier, LGBTQ individuals (mainly gay men and lesbians) started to join forces and organize themselves in the aftermath of operation 'Hyacinth'. But it was not until the fall of communism in Poland that many national and local organizations came into existence and could finally be officially registered⁶. To start with, these activists devoted their work to building a sense of community and solidarity, and to the creation of a homosexual (rather than an LGBT) identity through e.g. organizing meetings or parties and publishing occasional leaflets and magazines for sexual minorities. They failed, however, to

5 The most famous case was the murder of a popular patriotic priest, Jerzy Popieluszko, by the agents of the communist secret police in 1984.

6 The first LGBT organization that was legally recognized, in 1990, was the Lambda Groups' Association which has continued to function to this day, with a break in 1997–2004. Currently, it is the second largest LGBT organization in Poland.

spread their ideas and values to the public. Up to the end of the twentieth century homosexuality, not to mention other non-heteronormative representations and embodiments of sexuality, were still presented in the mainstream media mainly as an eccentricity.

This situation has clearly shifted at the beginning of the twenty-first century, when the Polish LGBT movement, while continuing its effort of identity building, has significantly extended its actions to include an outspoken assimilation policy. LGBT activists, with the support of a few politicians, have launched a number of important initiatives aimed chiefly at Polish public opinion rather than at individuals from sexual minorities themselves. These include the first Equality Parade in Warsaw (2001) and the March for Tolerance in Krakow (2004); a month-long heated exchange in a popular Polish daily, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, on the legal recognition of same-sex relationships, initiated by sociologist and LGBT activist Jacek Kochanowski (2002); the first political initiatives to legally recognize same-sex relationships (2002 and 2003); and a campaign, 'Let Them See Us', during which posters of gay and lesbian couples holding hands in public spaces were exhibited in galleries and, more importantly, on billboards in some of the larger Polish cities (2003). The campaign was launched by the biggest Polish LGBT organization, Campaign Against Homophobia, which was founded in 2001.

Thanks to these initiatives the status of gay men and lesbians in Poland has become politicized and has been seriously discussed in the country's mainstream media. However, although this situation has obviously helped to increase the visibility of sexual minorities within Polish society, it has not been directly translated into a common acceptance of non-normative forms of sexuality. Rather, public opinion has become strongly polarized over the issue. Extreme negative voices and strong positive reactions have met head-on. Public debate has more often resembled a fierce fight and a shouting match than a constructive discussion. A Polish academic, Pawel Leszkowicz (2004: 96) speaks of a 'zero duality' whereby arguments for clash with arguments against, a situation that, while it breaks with a history of one-sided, negative images of sexual minorities, at the same time prevents pluralistic views from developing and makes it more difficult to reach common ground or agreement.

No Queers Legally

In January 2004 discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of sexual orientation was banned in Poland by the Polish Employment Code. Unfortunately, this remains the only legal concession, at the national level, to LGBTQ rights in Poland. Moreover, even that piece of legislation was implemented as a consequence of the Polish obligations to the European

Union (EU) rather than as an initiative by Polish politicians: a European Antidiscrimination Directive required that all member states adopt such legislation. With a view to understanding the wider legislative picture, it may be useful to mention a number of unsuccessful attempts to change Polish legislation in favour of LGBTQ individuals and describe briefly the atmosphere of some of the recent political debates on sex and sexuality.

In 1995 there was a heated discussion in Poland over the new Constitution which was supposed to replace the communist version and better reflect the needs of a democratic Polish society. One of the most controversial issues was the legal recognition of same-sex relationships. Conservative politicians as well as the Roman Catholic Church opted for formulations in the Constitution that would make it impossible in the future to legally recognize 'homosexual marriages'. Moreover, they were against explicitly condemning discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. As a result, the final text of the current Polish Constitution, which came into effect in 1997, reads that marriage is 'a union of a man and a woman' as well as that no one shall be discriminated against 'for any reason whatsoever'. The latter phrase, which ideally should have included explicit reference to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, was construed as a victory by the conservatives.

The net result is that it has become impossible to legalize same-sex marriages in Poland without a change to the Constitution. By way of an alternative, there have been two political attempts to recognize same-sex relationships in terms other than 'marriage'. The first, in 2002, was the proposal of a cohabitation bill which was designed for both homo- and heterosexual couples. The second, put forward in 2003, aimed to establish a kind of civil union between two partners of the same sex. Both proposals excluded the possibility of gay adoption. In the end, both proposals met not only with predictable criticism from conservative politicians and the Church authorities but were also passed over by most left-wing and liberal politicians. Consequently they failed to be put to a vote.

In such debates, there has been a significant lack of understanding for the LGBT movement's objectives as well as a considerable degree of hypocrisy, especially among politicians holding human rights-related positions such as the former Polish Ombudsman Janusz Kochanowski or the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Legal Status Elżbieta Radziszewska. Both of these people assured LGBT activists of their support for sexual minority equal rights and even invited them for special meetings on the social and legal status of LGBT people in Poland. At the same time, they have continued to publicly question fundamental rights for sexual minorities. To give an example: as recently as October 2009 Mr Kochanowski felt it necessary to criticize a verdict that fined a woman for calling a gay man 'faggot'. He explained that we should not confuse tolerance with a compulsory acceptance. Surprisingly, only a month

later, he protested when Ms Radziszewska publicly called same-sex relationships ‘socially unacceptable’.

More conservative politicians, meanwhile, have not limited themselves to expressing their personal disapproval for LGBTQ rights; occasionally they go so far as to ban marches organized by LGBT activists. The former mayor of Warsaw, Lech Kaczyński, has twice banned an Equality Parade in the capital of Poland: in 2004 and 2005. He justified his decision by citing security reasons, pointing to previous clashes between Parade participants and their opponents, mainly young members of nationalist and neo-fascist organizations who had attacked what were essentially peaceful demonstrations. Tellingly, in 2005 he had no similar objections to allowing the organization of a so-called Normality Parade, during which young men, strongly opposed to LGBTQ rights, declared and paraded their heterosexuality. In the end, LGBT activists managed to organize officially illegal parades or divided them into a number of different rallies. The decisions of Lech Kaczyński met with strong criticism from many politicians both within and outside the country.

Looking at the current political landscape in Poland we should not expect any significant legal changes in favour of LGBTQ individuals in the immediate future. The political scene is now dominated by two right-wing parties which, despite occasional assurances of interest in equal rights for LGBTQ individuals, are reluctant to introduce any corresponding legislation. The third biggest party, which is politically on the left, includes some popular politicians who express a real interest in and understanding of sexual minority issues, but even this party has doubts about same-sex marriage and gay adoption.

It is also noteworthy that Poland is one of the three EU countries, together with the United Kingdom and the Czech Republic, that have opted out of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The crucial argument in the case of Poland was that the country might be forced, on the basis of the Charter, to legally recognize same-sex relationships. In the Polish context, sexual minorities are still occasionally associated, by conservatives, with a Western, or European Union ‘degeneration of moral values’. It is often assumed that a Catholic is much more likely to be a real patriot than a gay man.

More Gay than Queer – On the Self-awareness of LGBT Activists and Individuals

The Polish LGBT movement is obviously more gay than queer. Its politics are predominantly based on the ethnic/essentialist model, which assumes that all homosexuals share a natural desire for people of the same sex and, because of that, face discrimination in society (Seidman 1993). LGBT activists in Poland focus on actions that build a common positive identity for sexual minorities and

try to assimilate LGBT people into the dominant cultural group. Queer ideas of a socially constructed identity or subversive social activities are generally absent from the movement.⁷

The biggest social campaign by the Polish LGBT movement so far, 'Let Them See Us', is a good example of the insistence on inclusion, accommodation and normalization. The couples that were presented on billboards in Polish cities were depicted as holding hands in public places, usually smiling at each other and unremarkably dressed. They were all young to middle-aged, gay or lesbian, without any disabilities and obviously middle class. The message here seemed to be principally gay: 'We Are Everywhere' and as normal as you heterosexuals are; it was nothing like the queer slogan: 'We Are Here, We Are Queer, Get Fucking Used to It'. As Rafał Majka (2009) notes, such a reduction of a rich non-heterosexual culture to monogamous, normative, familiar and – to heterosexual eyes – pleasing frameworks takes place under the banner of social change and cultural reform.

The question arises then as to whether and how the recently founded Polish LGBT movement should apply the achievements of queer theory to its politics through e.g. questioning the notion of an essentialist identity and the privileged status of the institution of marriage, or whether it should still make use of the ethnic/essentialist approach to gain fundamental rights and widen the understanding of, and on behalf of, sexual minorities. The relatively coy and normative campaign 'Let Them See Us' still met with extremely negative responses and was perceived as highly controversial by the majority of conservative Poles. Some popular columnists proclaimed that people should have the right not to encounter such a 'parade of sexuality' in public spaces. In this light, it is hard to imagine any possible success for more confrontational and subversive actions by Polish LGBT activists, at least for the time being.

To complicate things, the Polish public debate on homosexuality is often polarized over the notion of the natural and unchangeable character of sexual desire, which is supported by the LGBT movement and systematically contested by a Catholic and conservative rhetoric that prefers to view homosexuality as a result of childhood emotional problems and thus not as natural nor unchangeable. As Joanna Mizielińska (2006: 127–8) notes, there is a danger that the introduction of queer theory, which likewise questions (though for completely different reasons) the essentialist character of sexual orientation, to the Polish LGBT movement's politics could be construed as an alliance with the opponents of sexual minorities' rights.

7 Among a handful of exceptions was the 'Anti-Homophobia Clinic' performance by the Lesbian Coalition in 2005, during which activists provoked people on the street to rethink their attitudes towards gay men and lesbians as well as to cultural norms of sexuality in general.

For the time being, there seems to be no alternative to making strategic and pragmatic use of the ethnic/identity approach in the politics of the LGBT movement in Poland, given the highly conservative and homophobic context. This does not mean that the achievements of queer theory and certain policies developed by movements in the West cannot be, at least partially, implemented. For example, Polish LGBT organizations, because they have arrived on the historic stage so late, could avoid the exclusive practices of early movements in the West and from the very beginning include into their actions non-normative individuals other than gay men and lesbians. The biggest organizations such as Campaign Against Homophobia or Lambda do actually attempt to be inclusive. Yet they do so in the face of significant voices, usually by local activists, who wish to limit the Polish LGBT movement to gay men and lesbians, and possibly bisexuals, arguing that there are hardly any representatives of other minorities within the movement and that it is hard for LGB activists to understand their needs and problems. On the other hand, some of these partially ostracized sexual minorities have recently started to organize themselves. A professional umbrella organization for transgender people, called Trans-Fuzja Foundation, was established in 2008, initiating the first public debates on transgender people in Polish mainstream media.

Exclusionary practices within Polish LGBT communities are especially widespread on the Internet. In 2009, I analyzed news posts on two popular Polish websites for sexual minorities: *Innastrona.pl*, the biggest Polish portal designed for gay men and lesbians, and *Gaylife.pl*, a less popular but still important website which, despite its special interest in gay clubbing, is often involved in social and political debates on sexual minorities.⁸ While the former usually ignores the existence of sexual minorities other than gay men or lesbians and in addition tends to leave women significantly under-represented, the latter overtly expresses its aversion to anyone who does not follow heterosexual gender norms, attacking effeminate men in particular.

Perhaps not so surprisingly then, a large number of Polish gay and lesbian individuals tend also to discriminate against each other. Artur Krasicki's article (2006), based on his research conducted among Polish homosexuals in 1999, tells us, among other things, that 57 per cent of respondents were against same-sex adoption and 19 per cent of these respondents gave as a reason the possible sexual abuse of a child in same-sex relationships. These respondents apparently view gay men and lesbians as paedophiles, or at least as people with stronger than average tendencies towards paedophilia – a clear indication of internalized

8 The editor of this website is in the habit of strongly criticizing Campaign Against Homophobia, accusing its members of idleness or misappropriation of funds, which resulted in a lawsuit in 2008. In spite of this, he used to be invited by the mainstream media as a representative of the LGBT community in Poland.

homophobia. Indeed, a significant proportion of Polish LGBTQ individuals, while adapting their lives to the heteronormative reality and accepting their lower position within the social system, do not understand all the demands and actions (especially the more provocative ones) of the Polish LGBT movement, do not identify themselves with it and do not support it. This makes it even more difficult for LGBT activists to promote equal rights for sexual minorities within Polish society, let alone introducing ideas from queer theory.

Polish Queer Education

While queer theory faced considerable difficulties when introduced into Polish LGBT politics, it has found more fertile ground in Polish academia and has been incorporated in the methodologies of a number of individual teachers and scholars. But before describing the condition of queer studies in Poland, we should probably have a quick look at the pre-university educational system, where Polish pupils have a chance to talk about sex and sexuality with so-called professionals, usually for the first time in their lives.

It is not compulsory to attend so-called ‘Education for family life’ classes in Poland, although, since 2009, parents who do not want their children to be taught this subject have to put their wishes in writing. However, it is not only the low attendance that raises doubts about these classes. Much more important is the poor quality of the knowledge that is imparted. First of all, according to the report ‘What does sex education really look like in Poland?’ by the Ponton Group of Sex Educators, about 24 per cent of the subject teachers are priests or teachers of courses on religion (Józefowska 2009: 4) who are evidently biased in favour of the conservative Roman Catholic approach to sexuality. Secondly, most of the textbooks accepted by the Polish Ministry of National Education to fill the needs of the subject have been criticized for presenting numerous stereotypical views on human sexuality. One of them, *Wędrując ku Dorosłości* (a Journey towards Adulthood), edited by Teresa Król, suggests for example that masturbation could cause infertility or developmental disorders, and puts homosexuality, bisexuality, sadism, paedophilia, etc. in one basket as ‘distorted forms of sexuality’.

Queer studies, although only initiated in Poland in the mid-1990s, have recently developed rapidly, especially at the institutes of gender studies which have been established at most of the bigger Polish universities. To start with, there were just a couple of enthusiasts who made the effort to introduce queer perspectives in their primary fields of interest. Gradually, the theory has attracted more attention, which has resulted e.g. in the organization of the first Polish conference on sex and sexuality in the context of queer theory, in 2001, as well as the foundation, in 2006, of the first academic journal of

queer studies, *InterAlia*, published annually (available at www.interalia.org.pl), or the establishment, by Campaign Against Homophobia, of the first regular semester-long interdisciplinary course of queer studies in 2008.

The fact that queer studies appeared in Poland almost at the same time as gender studies or gay and lesbian studies does present a few problems. As Mizielńska notes: theories that have been developing for years in other cultural conditions, that have been emerging from each other and referring to each other, appeared in Poland simultaneously. We got them all at once and try to extricate from this chaos something that could turn out to be a suitable and useful research tool in our context (Mizielńska 2006: 124–5). For the same reason, Polish academia sometimes has to deal with paradoxes, e.g. when it tries to teach about the achievements and importance of feminism and at the same time questions some of its principles.

Predictably, theoretical problems are not the only ones that queer studies and gender studies have to face in Poland. Both disciplines still meet with considerable scepticism and ignorance within more conservative quarters of academia. In January 2010, for instance, when a group of academics took the initiative to set up a gender studies centre at the University of Gdańsk, one of the university deans commented that if the centre was established he would initiate a special research centre on paedophilia. Unlike the latter, the gender studies centre did finally see the light of day.

Conclusion

In a survey conducted by the Polish Public Opinion Research Centre in 2008 (Wenzel 2008), 60 per cent of respondents answered in favour of tolerance towards homosexuality (31 per cent responded that it should not be tolerated and 9 per cent that it is hard to say). Yet in the same survey, only 37 per cent of respondents answered that homosexual people should be allowed to have sexual intercourse, while another 37 per cent replied that homosexuals should not have the right to do so and 26 per cent that it is hard to say. A quick calculation teaches us that 23 per cent of respondents who expressed the opinion that homosexuality should be tolerated, at the same time did not think, or at least were not sure, that gay men and lesbians should have the legal right to have sex with each other, even in private. Is this hypocrisy or just a very particular understanding of the word *tolerance*, influenced by the Vatican's official policy, which claims to accept gays and lesbians for what they *are* while still denouncing their sexual *acts* as sinful? Or maybe the responses resulted simply from an incomplete understanding of the question itself?

Certainly it is the case that terms like *tolerance*, *acceptance*, *LGBTQ*, *homophobia*, *discrimination*, *equal/special rights* or *queer* which circulate internationally are not

completely understood, or are understood differently, in different cultural contexts as well as by different groups and individuals who deal with them. In Poland, there are quite a few people who believe that they tolerate homosexuality but are not sure if gay men and lesbians should be legally allowed to have sex with each other, there are conservatives who opt for equal rights but are against the legal recognition of same-sex marriages, there are LGBT editors who fight against discrimination but routinely discriminate against effeminate gay men, there are LGBTQ individuals who are against homophobia but think it more likely that a child will be sexually abused in a family that is composed differently from monogamous heterosexual households, and there are also, finally, queer theorists, activists and other individuals who question Polish heteronormative reality. The latter, however, are still a very tiny minority. How queer is Poland? It is safe to say: not nearly queer enough.

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Chapter 12

Queer in Russia: Othering the Other of the West

Brian James Baer

Introduction

For centuries Russia has served as the sexual other of the West. As far back as the sixteenth century, Western travellers to Russia pointed out what appeared to them to be rampant homosexuality, while Russians themselves left few writings on the subject (Healey 2006: 111). During the Soviet period, Western representations of Russian sexuality ranged from the frigid Ninotchka, the eponymous heroine of Ernst Lubitsch's 1939 Hollywood film, to the bohemian pleasure-seeking Russian ballet troupe that crashes Peter Sellers's party in Blake Edwards's *The Party* (1968). Non-fictional accounts include the travel writing of the Swiss journalist Ella Maillart who went to the Soviet Union in 1930 and discovered a (hetero)sexual utopia which, Angela Kershaw asserts, also functioned as a 'rejection of "modern northern Europe"' (Kershaw 2006). Maillart's contemporary, the Austrian psychiatrist and biologist Wilhelm Reich came to a similar conclusion, declaring that the revolutionary movement was creating 'a sex-affirmative ideology and then giving it practical forms by legislation and a new order of sexual living' (1969: xxix).

By the late 1930s, however, openly gay observers of Soviet Russian society, such as André Gide and Pierre Herbart, as well as Reich himself, described a different reality. Herbart pointed out in disgust that 'homosexuals are rehabilitated by reading Marx in concentration camps; taxis must keep their lights on at night so as not to encourage sin; soldiers' underwear is examined in the Red Army in order to shame those who masturbate; [and] children don't need sex education because they never think about such filthy things' (Herbart 1937: 16–17); and Reich noted in a later edition of his book the increasing frequency of 'occasionally grotesque cases of persecution of homosexuals' (Reich 1969: 209).

The invisibility of homosexuality in Soviet Russia combined with the absence of research data on sexuality in general, let alone homosexuality, and the silence of scholars, which, the historian Dan Healey asserts, 'has been a productive taboo in domestic and Western historical writing, reinforcing myths

of a natural, elemental, and unchanging heterosexuality' (2001: 1), have made this enormous, culturally complex country into a virtual blank slate for the projection of Western sexual fears and fantasies. In the late Soviet period, the militant anti-communist Simon Karlinsky (1976) presented the last two decades of tsarist Russia as a 'kind of golden age' of homosexuality, which was brutally cut short with the rise of communism. The leftist historians John Lauritsen and David Thorstad (1974), on the other hand, located that golden age in the first decade of Soviet rule, when the Soviet criminal code made no mention of homosexuality.

There is little doubt that these outsiders' representations of sexuality, which emerged from what Healey refers to as a 'problematic source base', were to a greater or lesser extent shaped by 'a complex and evolving tradition by which an "Eastern" Europe was constructed as only just within the Christian orbit, yet at the same time as Other to a "civilized" West' (Healey 2006: 111). Within the modern psychoanalytic discourse of sexual liberation, the long-standing contest between East and West has been construed either in terms of a puritanical, repressed West and an uninhibited, sensual East, or of a well-adjusted, democratic West and a violent, repressive East. Reich, in fact, switches from the former interpretive opposition to the latter in the fourth edition of *Sexual Revolution*. As we shall see, this imagined geography haunts recent attempts to apply 'queer' to the Russian context.

Coming to Terms

In his article 'Global gaze/global gays', Dennis Altman cautioned scholars seeking alternatives to the Western model of gay identity outside the developed West. In those 'other' cultures, Altman noted, the use of terminology to describe (homo)sexuality, is not consistent, much of it is borrowed from the West, and it is often used 'to describe a rather different reality' (1997: 419). While terminology may travel very fast in our globalized world, conditions on the ground often prove recalcitrant, generating a fundamental problem of translation: non-equivalence. This is certainly the case with 'queer'.

The problem posed by the translation of 'queer' is compounded by the fact that queerness 'turn[s] out to be thoroughly embedded in modern Anglo-American culture' (Warner 2002: 209), yet has its roots in European, largely French, cultural theory, the enormous popularity of which among Anglo-American academics in the 1980–1990s was surely at some level a reaction to the triumphant, self-righteous conservatism of the Reagan/Thatcher years. Among Anglo-American scholars, 'queer' often transcends mere description, inscribed as it is with the postmodern celebration of fluidity and hybridity and a marked resistance to the globalization of homosexuality as an identity. By

acknowledging that what is considered abnormal is relative, queer is meant to frustrate attempts to posit essentializing sexual identities and supports a model of sexuality that stresses, ‘as did Freud, the inherent polymorphous nature of sexual desire’ (Altman 1982: x).

The utopian pretensions of queerness to a cosmopolitan ‘non-identity’ were for many bound up with the fall of communism in Russia and Eastern Europe. Thus Joseph A. Boone proclaims ‘the no-man’s-land demarcated by the Berlin Wall presented a particularly visceral representation of the power of constructed (and hence, one hopes, de-constructable) borders to divide the world into restrictive binaries, one thereby legislating what national – like sexual – identities are allowed to include and exclude’ (2000: 6).¹ Accordingly many scholars applied the prism of queer studies to the post-Soviet world. For Ken Plummer, for example, the Soviet Union held the promise of local, queer possibilities (1992: 17).

It should be noted, though, that the great optimism in the West over the queer possibilities unleashed by the fall of communism was not widely shared in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Thus while many Westerners were celebrating Russia’s ‘transition’ to a free-market capitalist democracy, the Russian feminist scholar Natalia Khodyreva asserted that the demise of communism had initiated a ‘renaissance of patriarchy’, which would see many Russian women return to the kitchen and gays and lesbians, after a brief hiatus, to the closet (Khodyreva 2005: 243).

Thus descriptions of Russia as ‘queer’ may reflect a rather long tradition of ‘Western romanticism about the apparent tolerance of homoeroticism in many non-Western cultures’, which, as Altman contends, ‘disguises the reality of persecution, discrimination, and violence, which sometimes occurs in unfamiliar forms’ (1996: 80). That risk is perhaps especially great in Russia where ‘no satisfactory translation exists in Russian for the English “queer” [which] has led authors who are interested in thinking about “strange” or “transgressive” love in Russian culture to cast about for alternative labels’ (Healey 2006: 108). While ‘queer’ has been borrowed into Russian as *kevır*, its usage is limited and it has still to be fully integrated into the Russian language – for example, there is no adjectival form for *kevır* while there is for the more established borrowing *gei* (geiovskii). Moreover, as a borrowing, *kevır*, like *feminizm*, is for Russians inscribed with Western hegemonic claims and so reinforces the still common belief among Russians that homosexuality is a foreign import. In the first ever Russian anthology of gender theory, *Antologiya gendernoi teorii* (2000), edited by Elena Gapova and Al’mira Usmanova, *queer theory* appears untranslated, in English letters, in a list of related topics, between *feminizm* and *postfeminizm*.

1 Significantly, though, the contributors to the volume Boone is here introducing discuss American culture, exclusively.

The borrowing *kvir* tends to be used in Russia as a synonym for such terms as *gei* and *goluboi*, which describe for the most part a totalizing gay identity, as in the title of the glossy magazine *Kvir* and of the publishing house of the same name, which specializes in gay-themed literature. A typical issue of the magazine *Kvir* (June 2004), for example, features articles on a number of openly gay-identified personalities, such as Keith Haring, Oleg Vikiuk, Pedro Almodóvar, and the American Slavist Kevin Moss, as well as homoerotic photographs of scantily clad male models. It would be difficult, therefore, to argue that the intended audience of this journal was the postmodern queer. As Healey noted above, there is as yet no native Russian term that describes a vision of a fluid sexuality unfettered by the opposition of gay and straight.

Queer in Russia

There is some, albeit problematic, historical evidence that would seem to support the notion of a queer Russia. Dan Healey (2001: 21–9) suggests three general conditions that enabled the exercise of queer behaviours. First, the enormous gap between elite and peasant cultures in Russia left peasant mores less closely regulated by church and state than in the West, as reflected in, among other things, the enduring legacy of paganism in Russian peasant culture. Second, the private lives of Russian aristocrats were also relatively free of social control. The combination of these two conditions led, in turn, to the often rather visible practice of age- and class-stratified homosexual relations – in a number of recorded cases, for pay. Third, certain traditional Russian social institutions, such as the monastery and the bathhouse, provided all male sites that facilitated, if not encouraged, same-sex relations. And so, to the extent that Russia was ever ‘queer’, it was a distinctly *premodern* queerness, enabled by the persistence of quasi-feudal conditions.

Modernization – imagined as bringing Russia more in line with the developed West – was accompanied by the increased regulation of sexual practices. For example, during Peter I’s forced Westernization of the Russian society, the first law restricting homosexual activity in the Russian military was passed. By the end of the nineteenth-century, the Russian medical and legal establishments were thoroughly versed in the latest Western ‘scientific’ views on the topic. It was, however, the profound modernization of Russian society initiated by the October Revolution of 1917 that brought about the most comprehensive regulation of homosexual behaviour in Russian history.

The fact that from 1922–1934 there was no law on the books criminalizing homosexual activity (or rape and incest) was, alongside other evidence, such as the entry on homosexuality (*gomoseksualizm*) in the 1930 *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, which offered a progressive view based largely on the pioneering work of

the German scholar Magnus Hirschfeld, has led some scholars, most notably Lauritsen and Thorstad (1974), to characterize the Soviet Union before Stalin as exhibiting unprecedented tolerance. Simon Karlinsky, however, cautioned against this interpretation. 'While Hirschfeld and Wilhelm Reich in Germany were acclaiming the supposedly enlightened treatment of gays in the Soviet Union', Karlinsky writes, 'the better-known gay Russian artists, actors and writers were retreating into deep closets or, if they could, emigrating' (1982: 33).² In January, 1934, there were mass arrests of homosexuals in Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov and Odessa and in March of that year homosexuality was recriminalized (1969: 209). Homosexuality would remain criminalized in Russia under Article 121 of the Criminal Code until 1993, and every year hundreds of Russians were in prison, serving terms of up to five years. The criminalization of homosexuality in Russia, however, was accompanied not by a symbolic politics, as in the West, but by the almost total absence of any mention of homosexuality in textbooks, scholarly research and the general media. More research needs to be done on this discursive silence, which, on the one hand, left Russians with little knowledge of sex and sexuality while, on the other hand, offering a certain protection to Russia's closeted sexual minorities: the general public was largely unaware of their existence. It is also worth noting that the Soviet discursive field was largely free of the moralizing religious views that continue to shape sexual practices in the United States. And although the Russian Orthodox Church has become politically powerful in post-Soviet Russia, its teachings on sex and sexuality are largely irrelevant to most Russians.

In any case, the combination of criminalization and silence produced a deep-seated homophobia on the part of many Russians and a deeply closeted homosexual subculture, which was difficult for researchers to penetrate. In a 1989 survey of Russians' attitudes toward homosexuality, 33 per cent of respondents thought that homosexuals should be 'liquidated', a Soviet-era bureaucratic term for exterminated, while another 30 per cent thought they should be isolated; 10 per cent responded that they should be 'left alone' and 6 per cent thought they should be in some way 'helped' (Kon 1997: 377). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, with the lifting of travel restrictions, a number of Westerners – journalists, writers, and academics – travelled to Russia to document the life of Russia's 'sexual minorities', the Soviet-era term used to describe Russia's LGBT population. The influx of Western money supported the creation of LGBT activist organizations, and the lifting of censorship restrictions, along with the general chaos of the early post-Soviet years, resulted in the sudden visibility of what Vitaly Chernetsky, has called 'possibly the most stigmatized and oppressed minority group in contemporary Russia: gays and

2 For more on the traditional intolerance of Marxist movements toward homosexuality, see Edge 1995.

lesbians' (2007: 146). In the immediate post-Soviet years, homosexuality became a hot topic in the media, a bold expression of Russia's new freedom of speech, and a sign of Russia's rapprochement with the West, with the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1993. Yet although the Western press predicted a rather straightforward transition for Russia to a Western-style capitalist democracy, by the end of the 1990s it was clear that this would not be the case. When Western money disappeared, the activist movement in Russia for all practical purposes ceased to exist, and Putin's rise to power was accompanied by a broad process of 'normalization', which once again relegated homosexuality to the margins.

Queering Russia

Motivated in large part by the laudable intention to resist foisting American gay and straight identities onto Russia, several Western observers in the early 1990s interpreted the failure of an activist movement there and the reluctance of many Russians to identify as gay or lesbian as representing a liberating and 'queer' alternative to the West. Deeply influenced by Western queer theory, the Columbia University graduate student in sociology Laurie Essig interpreted the failure of activism in Russia and the reluctance of Russia's (homo)sexuals to 'come out' as evidence that rigid gay and straight identities did not exist in Russia and that Russia was, therefore, queer: 'Queerness today [in Russia] is both more visible and more vibrant than ever before. The public queerness that is thriving does not require a fixed self-identity but instead provides images of queer desires that remain unattached to individual bodies' (Essig 1999: xvii). Essig is quite open in her celebration of queer subjectivity in Russia, which for the author holds the promise of unfettered sexual expression:

Unlike identities, subjectivities did not require actual persons to feel 'represented', nor did they require individuals to practice 'being queer' in certain ways. Instead, individuals could behave in ways that were both queer and straight without having the existence of 'queer subjectivities' threatened. Men could be married to women and still sleep with men. Women could have children with men and still have female lovers. Individual practices did not threaten to topple queerness itself (Essig 1999: 163).

And so she mourns the potential loss of that subjectivity through the 'colonial' intervention of Western activists: 'Of course, the Russians will not necessarily be *destroyed* in the campaign to identify. Some of them will *resist*; others will convert while simultaneously incorporating their own beliefs and practices, a *vibrant* Santeria within a *moribund* Catholicism' (Essig 1999: 132) [own italics].

Throughout most of the book Essig writes openly about how she experienced her own gender/sexual self differently in the context of post-Soviet Russia: she dresses in drag and in the closing chapter describes a fantasy she has involving a sexual encounter with a Central Asian woman. The Westerner's experience of her own queerness in Russia is in increasing competition with her analysis of Russian 'queers', as symbolized by the book's cover, which is dominated by a photograph of Essig herself. Moreover, Essig's postmodern critique of objectivity appears at times to reinforce longstanding Western views of Russia as enigmatic and mysterious, making Russia appear, paradoxically, premodern.

David Tuller, an openly gay American journalist living in San Francisco, arrived in Russia during the time Essig was there doing research for her dissertation, and they became friends. Clearly influenced by Essig – who delivered 'riffs on Foucault and queer theory' (Tuller 1996: 120) – Tuller, too, declares that Russians do not subscribe to rigid gay and straight identities: '[I] met so many bisexuals that I figured they couldn't all be making it up' (Tuller 1996: 42). He, too, experiences his own sexuality in different ways in Russia, in ways, he suggests, he never could have in the States – he dresses in drag and lusts after a Russian lesbian – again making Russia appear as a sexually liberating, queer place (at least for the well-heeled Westerner with the proper connections in Moscow). In his introduction to Tuller's book, Frank Browning tellingly declares that Tuller's personal experience in Russia largely overshadows his description of homosexuality there. The real story appears to be how Tuller got his groove back, and, it turns out, there was a Western audience of middle class gays like Browning anxious to read that story – as the reviews quoted on the back of the softcover edition testify.

Like Essig and Tuller, the British author Duncan Fallowell travelled to Russia in the early 1990s and had his personal sexual world shaken by the experience, which he recounts in the memoir *One Hot Summer in St. Petersburg*. The homosexual-identified Fallowell sleeps with a Russian woman and lusts after a Russian soldier. The experience is disorienting and leads Fallowell to declare: 'People's sense of identity is liquid. Russia itself is a liquid' (1994: 302). Having no scholarly pretensions, the novelist readily admits his urge to exoticize, if not orientalize, Russia: 'The effect of this music [Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sheherazade*] was not at all to act as an introduction to the *Arabian Nights* or the Islamic World, but to imprint on my imagination the idea of St. Petersburg as a place ineffably fabulous' (Fallowell 1994: 8).

Two other Western observers of early post-Soviet Russia, Daniel Schluter and Stever Kokker, tell a rather different story of 'queerness' in Russia than the one put forward by Essig, Tuller and Fallowell. Perhaps because they failed to find in Russia a 'queer utopia' to satisfy the millennial angst of Western gays and lesbians, their work has received much less attention. In Steve Kokker's case, however, this was not for want of trying. Kokker is a Canadian filmmaker

with an acknowledged fetish for military men. While in St. Petersburg Kokker was struck by the physical interaction between Russian military men in public settings – for example, walking with their arms around each other's shoulders – and fantasized that such forms of homosociality indicated an openness to homosexuality. Kokker decided to test out his hypothesis in two documentary films, *Bereza* [Birch Tree, 1996] and *Komrades!* (2003). In the former, Kokker interviews a young Russian naval cadet, Nikolai, to whom he offers food, vodka and a place to stay for the night. Obviously pleased to be the star of Kokker's documentary, Nikolai proudly poses for the camera, going so far as removing his shirt and flexing. At Kokker's prompting, he poses with a holster over his bare chest. However, when Kokker attempts to facilitate a transition from homosociality to homosexuality, Nikolai is dumbfounded and Kokker's once exuberant 'star' shuts down. He returns some time later to explain to Kokker that he had no suspicion of a homosexual subtext to their encounter and insisted that there were no homosexuals in his hometown of Kamchatka or in the military academy where he studies. And so Kokker's hope of recording an erotic episode with a straight-acting sailor was dashed and the filmmaker ended up capturing instead a moment of profound cultural misunderstanding.

Undeterred, Kokker continues his experiment in his next film *Komrades!* He invites several cadets from the naval academy to his apartment and as they prepare to stay the night – it appears they're planning to sleep in the nude – the filmmaker interviews them. After hearing professions of their intense love for their comrades, Kokker raises the question of homosexuality, at which point, as in *Bereza*, the fantasy of a simple transition from homosociality to homosexuality comes to an abrupt stop. Lying naked on Kokker's bed, one cadet explains that he and his comrades hate homosexuals because they are on the 'outside' and so can sleep with girls but choose not to. And so, he says matter-of-factly, when they encounter homosexuals, they beat them up. The comments of these cadets reflect little fluidity between homosociality and homosexuality.³

Once we accept that such homosociality is not a sign of fluid, polymorphous sexuality, we confront the fact that none of the possible explanations of these intense expressions of homosociality is in any sense 'liberating'. It is likely that such behaviours are enabled by the absence of a visible category of homosexuality, which allows these expressions of male intimacy to avoid stigmatization. And when homosexuality (typically between an adult man and an adolescent boy) does occur in such societies, it is almost invariably organized around an active/passive

3 Kokker's misinterpretation of Russian homosociality is similar to that described in *James Baldwin's Turkish Decade*, by Magdalena J. Zaborowska. Jonathan Boswell (1994, between 192 and 193) likewise misreads the traditional Russian greeting between two men of a kiss on the lips. And Neil Miller (1992: 78) warns against similar misinterpretations of homosocial behaviour in Egypt.

opposition, according to which the active partner retains his masculine status and so avoids stigmatization as a pervert, while the passive partner is seen as feminine and so treated with the degree of opprobrium consonant with a deep-seated sexism. This familiar paradigm applies to Russia too.⁴

Daniel Schluter was another Western observer who found Russia to be markedly less queer than Essig, Tuller, and Fallowell. Also a graduate student in the sociology department of Columbia University, Schluter did his field work in Russia at approximately the same time as his classmate, Essig. However, Schluter's methodology differed from Essig's in a number of ways. First, he based his dissertation on survey data. Second, he avoided the use of 'queer', preferring native Russian terms for the description of homosexuality, namely *goluboi*. His data revealed a high percentage of self-identified gays although it also indicated that most were reluctant to 'come out' to anyone outside their families. This suggests that Essig's decision to study only 'public displays of queerness' skewed her research of a society in which the gap between public and private is enormous, and the Western activist phrase 'the personal is the political' has an ominous Soviet-era ring to it. In a society as homophobic as Russia, it is no surprise that individuals might avoid adopting a gay identity in public. In any case, Schluter's research would be confirmed by historians of Russia's sexual minorities, such as Dan Healey (2002), who has documented the existence of a 'gay' subculture, albeit clandestine, throughout the Soviet period. In other words, Essig's model of an innocent 'queer' Russia colonized by restrictive Western identities is fundamentally flawed. There was always a tradition of gay identity in Russia.

Russia vs. Queer

In the absence of institutionalized, exclusive gay and straight identities, other no less – and often much more – rigid identities are often present to fill the imagined void. Moreover, anti-gay violence and profound homophobia in post-Soviet Russia challenge the existence of a postmodern queer culture, let alone a queer utopia, there. But if we are to reject the 'queer hypothesis', then how do we explain the reluctance of Russians to publicly adopt exclusive gay and straight identities and the almost total failure of a Russian gay/lesbian activist movement?

The best explanation is undoubtedly the most obvious one: the deep-seated homophobia and utter lack of legal protections in housing and the workplace for individuals who openly identify as gay or lesbian. In other words, the closet. Legal declarations by gay-identified Russians who have recently sought asylum

4 See Miller 1992: 76.

in the United States describe not only the violence faced by openly gay and lesbian Russians – typically in the form of gay bashings by skinheads – but also the reluctance of Russian police to pursue justice in such cases. The fact that when the 2007 and 2008 gay pride parades in Moscow were violently broken up by skinhead thugs, Russian police arrested the protesters for assembling without a license, suggests tacit approval on the part of the authorities of the skinheads' efforts to 'clean up' Russian society.

At the same time, the material conditions necessary to support an openly gay/lesbian identity are still largely absent in contemporary Russia. Difficulties in obtaining housing, the total absence of safe meeting places for gays and lesbians outside the two capitals – not to mention gay neighbourhoods – and the pervasive societal expectation to marry young and have children pose enormous problems for any Russian interested in pursuing a 'gay lifestyle'. Moreover, the general Russian intolerance for weirdness and non-conformity, combined with the organization of urban Russians in large apartment complexes, which allow them to monitor the comings and goings of their neighbours, makes it difficult for Russians to lead anything but the most closeted 'gay' lifestyle. This in turn helps to explain the enormous popularity of the website *gay.ru*, which provides a safe and anonymous place for Russians to meet other gay-identified individuals and to be introduced to the notion of a gay/lesbian community, supported by articles on 'gay' history, culture and medicine. Personal ads on the site suggest that in such a protected setting, Russians are willing to gay-identify.

Moreover, in contemporary Russia, there is a deep-seated reluctance on the part of most Russians to recognize or sanction minority identities and consequently the civil rights model of activism practiced in the United States. The belief in universal identity – in this case, Russian national identity – and suspicion of minority identities produced a strong backlash to the notion of a unique gay identity. The writer Mikhail Zolotonosov, for example, in a review of Kostia Rotikov's *Drugoi Peterburg* [The Other Petersburg], vituperated against the author's description of his work as 'gay folklore'. In an apparent attempt to halt the disintegration of Russian literature – one of the most powerful sources of modern Russian identity – Zolotonosov criticized the work as 'something like a manifesto of homosexual ideology' (1999: 197). He declared:

There is no such thing as homosexual literature, neither fiction nor folklore, nor any other type, and there cannot be. ... Homosexuality as a form of sexual life, as an ethos (based on play, in which men play roles of active and passive), as a psychology – that exists. But there are no means available for the construction of some particular literary form on the part of homosexual authors. There are particular thematic concerns, but no special literature or culture as a whole (Zolotonosov 1999: 197).

Similarly, Evgenii Vitkovskii, in his introduction to the 2000 Russian edition of the complete poems of Oscar Wilde, criticizes Western scholarship, which tends to divide the artist's soul into a series of minority identities. American and English writing on Wilde is, according to Vitkovskii:

Lies, only lies, and nothing but lies ... For it is impossible to reduce the work and style of Wilde to his Irish background, his Oxford education, his dandyism, his *homosexuality*, his incarceration, his social roots, the influence of classical, French, and Italian cultures, his 'inclination toward Catholicism', or even his 'desire to be recognized for something' (2000: 9) [own italics].

Vasily Aksenov (1996) in the short story *V raione ploshchadi Dupon* [Around Dupont Circle] offers a moral that is fully consonant with Vitkovskii's denunciation of Western scholarship. The story recounts the life in emigration of a young openly-gay Moscovite, Zhenia Katsel'son. Zhenia moves to Washington, DC, where he assimilates seamlessly into contemporary American society. Looking forward to leading an openly-gay lifestyle, Zhenia and his Russian friends are soon disenchanted with the American gay scene and gradually return to their own company. But it is too late. They have all contracted HIV and die one by one of AIDS. Faced with his imminent death, Zhenia embraces his Russian identity. Realizing how full and rich his life had been in Moscow, he now answers the phone in Russian and requests Russian food. Aksenov presents a damning commentary on American gay identity, which is described in the story as vulgar and soulless. However, he does not present a postmodern queer alternative. Zhenia's searching only comes to an end when he abandons a gay lifestyle and embraces his Russian identity.

Aksenov's story and the comments by Zolotonosov and Vitkovskii suggest a fundamental incompatibility of Russian national identity, imagined as universal, and a sectarian 'gay' identity. Moreover, the close association of gay identity and the gay activist movement with the West, and specifically with America, suggests that the general reluctance of some Russians to identify as 'gay' may also be understood as an act of resistance to Western cultural hegemony. Indeed because homosexuality continues to be imagined in Russia as foreign and in almost exclusively gendered terms – i.e., as a female soul in a male body – it has become for many Russians a symbol of the nation's decline, of Russia's loss of 'virility', and its vulnerability *vis-à-vis* the West. Aleksandr Porokhovshchikov, a respected Russian stage and screen actor, links Russia's economic crisis to impotence, homosexuality and gender reversal:

the knight living in the [Russian] male is gradually shriveling [сѣживается] to the size of a tiny gnome. ... Intimate relations between people are being

destroyed, families are falling apart, and women are becoming nervous and aggressive (2009: online).

The juxtaposition here of impotence and homosexuality is no coincidence; homosexuals are often presented in Russia not as sexually voracious, as is common in the West, but as asexual, passive and effeminate. The embattled state of Russian national identity and the post-Soviet crisis of masculinity (i.e., loss of virility) have made it that much more difficult to accommodate homosexuality (understood as effeminacy) within a traditional conception of Russian identity.

When homosexuality is accommodated within Russianness, however, it is through a quasi-religious discourse on suffering. In a number of literary works and films that feature homosexual characters, homosexuality represents a temporary state through which the character passes in order to integrate himself once again into a universal – typically Russian – identity. For many Russians, that was the path taken by Oscar Wilde, who presented ‘the traditional image of the artist for whom suffering and unhappy love showed the way to God’ (Lavut 1997: 5). According to this very Russian narrative, the suffering associated with homosexuality develops the hero’s soul, making him more human – that is, a universal man. There are almost no depictions of ‘successful’ gay or lesbian relationships in post-Soviet Russian media, and representations of openly gay characters are purchased at the cost of asexuality and suffering, qualities diametrically opposed to the politicized queer movement in the West. As Grigorii Chkhartishvili puts it: ‘homosexuality is primordial tragic because it almost always condemns the individual to solitude’ (1999: 356).

The intersection of sexuality and nationalism in Russia also helps to explain the apparent ‘queerness’ of the precocious Russian intellectuals Vladimir Mogutin, Evgeniia Debrianskaia, and Masha Gessen, who served as Essig’s cicerones in Russia. Their rejection of gay and straight identities can be read as a refusal to consign Russia to simply replaying the (Western) history of gay/lesbian activism (the closet, the movement, pride and community), which Essig describes dismissively as ‘the “standard” Western fairytale’ (1999: 66). Well-versed in Western theory, these individuals were indeed queer *avant la lettre* and were intent on presenting Russia to Essig as an avant-garde queer place – and it was clearly a story Essig wanted to hear.

However, Mogutin’s eventual emigration to the United States suggests that Russia was not as ‘queer’ as he would have liked Essig to believe. In any case, the flirtation of ‘queer’ Russians with ultra-nationalist ideology (Limonov, Debrianskaia) and even with fascist imagery (Mogutin) suggests how central the notion of national identity is in the Russian sexual imagination and how closely that notion of national identity is associated with a vision

of masculinity, imagined in very rigid, exclusive terms. As Peter Lentini contends, 'post-communist Russia as a society [is] characterized by a violent, competitive value system which empowers heterosexual male entrepreneurs, mafiosi and soldiers, subordinating social groups which do not conform to its dominant male cultural perspectives like women, lesbians, gay men and bisexuals, victims of socio-economic transformation, migrants and refugees' (1996: 157).

Conclusions

While Western observers' interpretation of Russia as 'queer' is meant to avoid the colonizing gesture of imposing the largely Anglo-American notion of exclusive gay and straight identities – and the attendant commodification of gay subculture – onto other cultures, it unwittingly performs the no less colonizing, and one might even say orientalizing, gesture of imagining non-Western societies as utopias – in particular, queer utopias – 'where one could look for sexual experience unobtainable in Europe' (Said 1979: 190). Ironically, this is where the leftist scholarly project of queering Russia overlaps with the profit-seeking gay tourist industry. Regardless of conditions on the ground, tourist magazines such as *The Guide* and *Passport* have repeatedly encouraged gays to travel to Russia. A comparable romanticization of homosexuality in Russia is evident in Dominique Fernandez's 1999 novel *Nicolas* and in Gilles Leroy's novel *L'amant russe* (*The Russian Lover*, 2002), both of which portray a romantic gay relationship between a Russian and a Frenchman set against the exotic backdrop of twentieth-century Russia.

While the public invisibility of homosexuals under the Soviet regime may have offered some degree of protection to those who engaged in same-sex relations, the criminalization of homosexual activity and a lack of civil rights discouraged those individuals from 'coming out' and claiming a 'gay' identity. The association of public activism with the West further problematized the act of coming out for many Russians, who had hoped that democracy would bring with it, if nothing else, a more protected private realm. It is therefore naïve to assume that under conditions of homophobia, claiming the label of bisexual is more an embrace of non-normative sexuality (queerness) than it is a way of distancing oneself from homosexuality. In any case, we should perhaps withhold judgment on the (homo)sex life of Russians until more voices are heard in the form of first-person testimony and empirical research data, while acknowledging that the continued lack of research on this topic is certainly itself an effect of an entrenched homophobia.

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Chapter 13

Queer in Spain: Identity without Limits¹

Santiago Fouz-Hernández

From Franco to 'Orgullo': Brief Background to the Spanish Gay Movement

One of the striking contradictions that emerges from comparing the Anglo-American and the Spanish gay struggles is that whilst most Anglo-American societies have been traditionally more accepting of gay and lesbian people, post-Franco Spanish law has been much more favourable than laws in Anglo-American countries.² This paradox can find its logic in Foucault's belief that repressive power is not an oppressive force but a 'productive network' (1987: 94), as indeed De Fluvia (1977) Aliaga and Cortés (1997: 30) and Bergmann and Smith (1995: 10) amongst others have noted. It was the existence of old discriminatory laws that encouraged the early lesbian and gay movements of the 1970s in Catalonia and the Basque Country. As Llamas and the late Vidarte have observed, the historical rejection of imposed identities in various regions of Spain underlines the close relationship between nationalist and gay and lesbian movements within the nation (2001: 262–3). The diversity of (regional) identities within Spain is suggestive of the country's queer potential and yet, as Llamas and Vidarte argue (2001: 263), those same principles, together with the

1 A longer version of this piece was published in 2004 in *JILAS* (now *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research*), 10(1), 63–82. I would like to thank Taylor and Francis for granting permission to re-publish it here. I am also grateful to Professor Christopher Perriam (University of Manchester), to Dr Ian Biddle (University of Newcastle upon Tyne) and the two anonymous reviewers of the original article for their useful comments and suggestions. This chapter is an updated and slightly expanded version of the first half of the original article. Two of the most prominent writers and activists that I mention in this piece have passed away since the publication of that article. I would like to dedicate this chapter to the memory of Leopoldo Alas Mínguez (1962–2008) and Paco Vidarte (1970–2008).

2 Lesbian and gay Spaniards have traditionally emigrated to the United Kingdom or to the States in search of a more accepting environment. See Smith (1999: 32), Aliaga and Cortés (1997: 34) or Pichardo Galán (2003).

nomadic nature of the lesbian and gay struggle, make it difficult to conceive a 'national' struggle or to talk about Spain in terms of a 'queer nation'.³

According to Llamas and Vila, the history of homophobia in Spanish Law starts in 1954 when 'homosexuals' are added to the list of offenders of the 1933 'Vagrancy Law' (Llamas and Vila 1997: 193). From the early 1970s, the gay movement expanded to Castile and other parts of the country bringing about the emergence of various pressure groups whose efforts culminated in the removal of several homophobic laws and clauses in the early years of the democracy. As a result, some of these pressure groups dissolved, giving way to the creation of other associations such as the integrationist *Colectivo Gay de Madrid* (COGAM) in 1986 (from which the separatist *Radical Gai* seceded in 1991) and new challenges, such as the reformation of the fight against AIDS, the inclusion in the Penal Code of homophobia as a crime (achieved in 1995) and the juridical equality of gay couples, especially in relation to same-sex marriage and adoption rights (achieved in 2005).

As noted by Vicente Aliaga, post-Franco gay presence in Spanish society only slowly became visible during the years of *la movida* (Aliaga and Cortés 1997: 55).⁴ The *movida* (literally 'the movement') is a term applied to the upsurge of artistic activity in Madrid during the political transition, from the late 1970s through to the mid-1980s. It signified an important cultural transition for the country which was beginning to open up to the rest of the world and which experienced an intensive period of creativity which allowed new generations of artists the possibility of expressing themselves in ways that had been forbidden before. Despite an acknowledged refusal to commit to politics, the *movida* provided the right atmosphere for the display of alternative lifestyles, creating the impression that Spain was becoming more sexually liberated and perhaps more accepting of new attitudes to gender and sexuality (as seen in the early films of Pedro Almodóvar, which are arguably a product of the *movida* and are often analysed in this context). This atmosphere would, no doubt, contribute to a new, less male-chauvinistic social behaviour that arguably remains today in the younger generations (see Triana Toribio 2000), although it is important to remember that, as Mira has argued, the *movida* did not deal with the issue of homosexuality directly (2000: 246–7). After this period, gay visibility in Spain was ironically helped by the AIDS crisis during the 1980s and publicized

3 Llamas has also suggested that the proliferation of various flags within the gay communities reflects a reaction against geographical frontiers and national flags (in Fouz-Hernández 2003: 92–3).

4 Since the original publication of this piece, a number of important volumes about the history of homosexuality have been published in Spain, including, in alphabetical order, Arnalte (2003), Mira (2004), Olmeda (2004), or Petit (2003) and (2004). All these books are reviewed in Fouz-Hernández (2007).

sex scandals in the mid-1990s, notably the Army club trials (a boy prostitution club in Seville frequented by celebrities) and the homophobic declarations of the mayor of Sitges, a well-known holiday resort internationally popular with gay men, that made headlines in 1996.⁵ Gay characters gained considerable presence in Spanish films and media during the 1990s (although often depicted unfavourably, as Alfeo Álvarez (1997), Llamas (1997), Aliaga and Cortés (1997) or Fouz-Hernández and Perriam (2000) among others have discussed) and gay visibility as a whole saw an unprecedented increase during the 2000s, with the GLBT pride marches gaining vastly in popularity. Only 5,000 people attended the first ever national gay march in Madrid in 1995 (Llamas and Vila 1997: 222; Llamas 1997: 127–33), but over two million joined the Europride march in Madrid in 2007, the biggest Europride ever (Europride 2007).

Consuming Gayness

In the mid-1990s, José Miguel Cortés was cautious in his evaluation of these indubitable improvements: ‘Spanish contemporary society tolerates homosexuality as long as homosexuals are discreet, polite and agree to follow the rules of heterosexual relationships’ (Aliaga and Cortés 1997: 112). This opinion was echoed by lesbian activist Mili Hernández, in her references to the ‘*gay amaestrado*’ [‘the tamed gay’] (Aliaga and Cortés 1997: 211). As in most Western countries, this apparently increasing acceptance of gay men and lesbians in Spain has been facilitated by the *DINK* factor (Double Income, No Kids) and the consequent commodification of the gay scene in big cities such as Madrid and Barcelona. Many businesses were quick to cash in on the ‘pink Euro’ and the number of gay businesses – from bars and saunas to specialist bookshops and legal firms – proliferated in the second half of the 1990s and throughout the 2000s (see, for example Álvarez and Colomer 1998 or Llamas 1997: 253–68). This mercantile aspect of the concept of ‘gay community’ was humorously but vigorously attacked in the comedy *Chuecatown/Boystown* (dir. Juan Flahn, 2007) (see Fouz-Hernández forthcoming). The advantages of this situation are as clear as its drawbacks. On the one hand, since the 1990s Spanish LGBT communities have enjoyed a much greater level of visibility and more places in which to socialize, attaining the kind of voice that Western countries had been enjoying for some time: free local magazines in the main capitals, a national gay web portal (chueca.com), a monthly glossy, the now defunct *Zero* (ceased in 2009 as a result of the economic downturn and rapid decrease of printed media sales) and even exclusively Gay and Lesbian publishing houses,

5 Aliaga and Cortés (1997: 53–9, 83–8) and Llamas (1997: 116–26) discuss in some detail the issue of homophobia in Spanish media during the 1990s.

such as *Egales* and *Cómplices*.⁶ Yet, the fact is that the already familiar interests behind this or any so-called gay boom imply not only a direct exploitation of the supposedly high earning, free spending gays but also the marginalization of those gays with restricted incomes. As Sergi Garcia has put it: ‘if you are rich, you are gay; if you are poor you suddenly become a fucking queer’ (Álvarez and Colomer 1998: 37) [own translation]. This commercial aspect of the gay lifestyle has also been interpreted by critics such as Alberto Mira as a negative sign of political laziness: ‘gay identity was resisted when it might have had political or cultural importance, but [was] simply unstoppable ... as a marketable product’ (2000: 247). Another impending danger of this rapid expansion (by now familiar to most Western countries) is the possibility of a backlash and ghettoization. In the early part of the last decade, Llamas and Vidarte denounced how gay territories such as Madrid’s Plaza de Chueca can function as new spaces of control, both from the inside (different bars and terraces attract and accept different crowds, different ‘models’ of homosexuality, rejecting others) and, more importantly, from the outside: ‘looking in from the street, some of the new cafes look like fish tanks and some of the clientele exotic goldfish’ (2000: 217).⁷ Others, like writer Eduardo Mendicutti (1998: 109–12), proposed that, while gay people should be committed to the production and consumption of gay culture, it is important to move between gay and mainstream cultures and communities, not least because gay communities often exclude certain gay sectors anyway.⁸

Ironically, and whilst the visibility in the streets and media has enjoyed a considerable level of growth (as described by Llamas in Fouz-Hernández 2003: 85–6), the juridical achievements of the last two decades or so have also contributed to a feeling of complacency among the GLBT community. Yet, this visibility did not necessarily impact GLBT awareness in Spanish society as a whole. Using opinion polls from the late 1990s, Calvo (2003) analyzed the sociological implications of the sudden increase of gay visibility and changing attitudes towards homosexuality in Spain. He concluded that, whilst the attitude towards the rights of homosexual people seemed to be increasingly favourable, the moral perception of homosexuality in Spain was still negative. He found, for example, that adoption rights were strongly opposed by the general public during the 1990s. In that context, it is also telling that one of the key academic publications that followed the legalization of same-sex marriage in Spain was

6 Alcaide et al. (2001: 119–46) provide a still relatively current overview of gay media in Spain.

7 See also Aliaga and Cortés (1997: 173–80) and, on the issue of gay space as a control strategy Whittle (1994).

8 On Spanish gay culture, see also Alcaide et al. (2001: 87–106).

conceived in the context of a perceived need for the eradication of homophobia in Spanish society (Rodríguez González 2007: 15).

Despite the remarkable achievements of the last two decades, then, the struggle continues. From its initial emphasis on the removal of homophobic laws and clauses, the legal battle shifted its focus to the creation of new provisions that recognized same-sex marriage or adoption rights by same-sex couples. More recently the attention has turned to the rights of transsexuals, who, since 2006, can change their names and gender in their national ID cards regardless of whether they have undergone a sex-change operation. Another important issue to bear in mind is the invisibility of an important constituency of men who have sex with men in Spain, which has contributed to the spread of HIV and AIDS. The Administration's reluctance to recognize the extent or political implications of the pandemic, and indeed the general avoidance of any discussion of sexual practices, especially during the 1980s and 1990s, made it harder to target specific groups in safe-sex campaigns (as argued by Mira (2000: 247; 1999: 622–3) and Llamas (1995: xii, and in Fouz-Hernández 2003: 95–6). By the end of the 1990s, Spain had an estimated 30,000 more cases of HIV positive people and people living with AIDS than the United Kingdom (with a population approximately one third larger). Yet, officially, only 16 per cent of these cases were gay men, as opposed to, for example, 69 per cent in Britain (Richardson 1999: 26). Hence, it seems that while Spanish gay movements have been successful in eradicating homophobic Francoist laws, there are now new forms of oppression often disguised as gay-friendly businesses and media which operate alienating modes of control.

Debating 'Marica' Identity

Past and Present Rejection of Categories

As Perriam noted in the early part of the last decade, much of the Spanish 'queer' criticism produced in the 1990s was based on the classic Anglo-American theorists and debates (2002: 105). A considerable proportion of the foundational work of Spanish Gay, Lesbian and Queer Studies was produced by either Anglo-American authors (many of those cited here: Cleminson, Perriam, Smith, Bergmann) or Spanish scholars working in English-speaking countries (the also cited Martínez-Expósito or Mira). In particular, the emphasis on gay identity and difference that Aliaga and Cortés elaborate on had already been described by Cohen, D'Emilio or Epstein among others 'as the crux and the crisis for most of the gay and lesbian organizing' in the USA (D'Emilio in Cohen 1991: 72, also Epstein 1987). More recently, however, Buxán Bran has rightly reclaimed the important and original contribution of Spanish scholars

in the creation of an autochthonous queer theory. He argues that ‘the direct contact with the Spanish reality’ experienced by Spanish queer academics has generated new modes of understanding homosexual culture that reconfigure the imported theories (2006: 7). In particular, he highlights the various courses and conferences held in Spanish universities since the mid-1990s. Gay and Lesbian Studies in Spain were unofficially inaugurated with a lecture series in the summer of 1995 held at the University of Vigo, in the traditionally conservative North Western region of Galicia, and organized by Xosé M. Buxán Bran (see Llamas and Vidarte 2001: 260). The seminars were later published in a book edited by Buxán Bran (1997). The example was followed by universities in other parts of the country, from Alcalá de Henares to Barcelona, València or Seville. For Guasch and Viñuales, the creation of a Master in Human Sexuality (offered by Spain’s UNED – National University of Distance Education), the creation of a working group on the sociology of sexuality within the Spanish Federation of Sociology, and the contribution of the Ethnographic School of Tarragona were also important landmarks in the rise of studies on sexuality in 1990s Spain (2003: 13).

Ricardo Llamas’s *Teoría Torcida* (literally ‘bent theory’ – originally conceived as ‘*teoría invertida*’) was published in 1998. Although Llamas did not set out to establish Queer Studies in Spain, nor to create a Spanish alternative to the Anglo-American body of work (Llamas in Fouz-Hernández 2003: 91–2), his book is regarded as a landmark text in Spanish Queer Studies. In the introduction, Llamas warns the readers of the limitations of sexual identity and argues that ‘homosexuality’, is an alienating ‘impossible category’, which serves the purpose of being the ‘sick’ exception that confirms the heterosexual norm (1998: 38–9). Instead, he proposes the term ‘*realidades gays y lésbicas*’ (literally ‘gay and lesbian realities’) as a non-exclusivist way to refer to those who elude or defy the ‘sexual norm’ and, by the end of the book, seemed to adopt ‘queer’ as a suitable strategy for the Spanish context, proposing the terms ‘*bollera*’ and ‘*marica*’ (coined by Madrid-based groups L.S.D. and *Radical Gai*) as political tools (Llamas 1998: 375). Yet elsewhere he has claimed that, in spite of the problems with ‘identity’ and the obvious differences between gay and lesbian individuals, the organization of gays and lesbians was a crucial political strategy (Llamas 1997: 22).

Not only did Spanish gay activism and queer academic discourses catch up with the rest of the world very quickly and sharply during the last two decades or so, some of the arguments of the early ‘homosexual’ coalitions anticipated post-modern queer discourses – as noted by Llamas and Vila amongst others (1997: 223). Bergmann and Smith (1995: 11) identify a first rejection of sexual identities as social constructs in a Preface to Jean Nicolas’s *La cuestión homosexual* written by Lubara Guílver and Roger de Gaimon and published in 1975. In 1977 the *Coordinadora de Frentes de Liberación Homosexual del Estado Español* (Coalition

of Spanish Homosexual Liberation Fronts) rejected fixed roles and identities in their manifesto. Most likely influenced by contemporary French movements, the *Coordinadora* rejected such categories because, according to Richmond Ellis, they perceived them to be ‘an instrument intended to repress homoeroticism’ (1997: 17). Armand De Fluvià, one of the founders of the gay movement in Catalonia, defined gay people as ‘those people who do not believe in social and sexual categories ... that are a product of dominant ideology’ (in Aliaga and Cortés 1997: 44). Even earlier, as Smith has pointed out, the work of Federico García Lorca ‘embraced both essential identity and gestural performance’ in the first half of the twentieth century, thus signifying an early transcendence of the generally accepted antinomy between essentialist and constructionist approaches (P.J. Smith 1992: 12).⁹ Other prominent gay writers since, such as Juan Goytisolo and Alberto Cardín have also voiced their rejection of gay identity and, in the 1990s, a group of Spanish intellectuals likewise declared themselves to be against the category ‘gay’ as an identity marker (see Aliaga and Cortés 1997: 48–9, 232–3 and Mira 2000: 242–3). Llamas and Vila locate the incorporation of the term ‘queer’ into Spanish discourses to 1993, the time when the Radical Gai’s magazine *De un plumazo* started to call itself a ‘*queerzine*’ (a move also adopted a year later by Madrid’s main lesbian group L.S.D. in their own ‘*bollozine*’ *Non-Grata*) (Llamas and Vila 1997: 223). At this point, Llamas and Vila appear to welcome the introduction of queer into Spanish discourse as ‘a mixture of dykes, queens, butch, femme, HIV+ and sadomasochists’, a marginal but efficient way of expressing discontent with the established social order which queers regard as ‘intolerable and limiting’ (1997: 224). The strategy adopted in the 1990s by L.S.D. of constantly changing their name (*Lesbianas Sin Dueño*; *Lesbianas Sudando Deseo*, and so on) fits well the queer model, not committing themselves to a specific label.

Dangers of ‘Queer’

Despite this long history of rejecting identity, authors including Llamas and Vidarte wrote in the mid-1990s against the dangers of the erasure of identity, echoing Bersani’s (1995) critique of queer as a selfish, bourgeois and ultimately inefficient strategy:

Without identity following the total dissolution of categories, we are left with no political force. How could we group ourselves if we are just individuals who do not belong to any given category? Are we facing an individual fight? ...

⁹ Cleminson’s (1995) collection of pre-Francoist anarchist texts is a good testimony of the existence of early discourses of homosexuality in the Spanish context (see also Cleminson (1999) and Cleminson and Vázquez García (2000)).

Identity is the only way of collective resistance and the only route to establish a united front. ... The dissolution of categories would result in the reduction of homosexuality to the sphere of the private, the intimate, the personal. Institutionalized homophobia would then spread by means of vandal acts against individuals (2000: 298–9) [own translation].

In this context Alberto Mira criticizes what Dall’Orto (1990) called ‘Mediterranean homosexuality’ as a ‘comfortable’ model that he describes as ‘having the best of both worlds’ (2000: 244). In this model, sexual acts do not determine one’s identity as the gender and/or sex of one’s sexual partner can vary throughout one’s life. By refusing to stick to a (homo)sexual identity, ‘desire can be fulfilled without necessarily having to suffer social marginalization’ (Mira (2000: 244). Echoing the point made earlier about dangers of the erasure of identity, Mira regards this model as homophobic since it could perpetuate closetedness and, therefore, homophobia. He calls for the acknowledgement of gay history and the articulation of a gay identity that will allow homosexuals ‘to work at creating the terms by which they want to be perceived’ (2000: 249).

In the introduction to *Sexualidades*, published in 2003, Guasch and Viñales openly reject queer theory, arguing that it would be dangerous to de-contextualize it and uncritically accept it outside its markedly Anglo-American origins. They see the emergence of queer theory as a reaction against the apparent naturalization of hegemonic identities in the United States and an attempt to ‘define, colonize and occupy new intellectual spaces in the extremely saturated Anglo-American market’ (2003: 15). Their main problems with ‘queer’ are on the one hand that importing a theory so highly mediated by its political context is not advisable and, on the other, that queer theorists seek to homogenize the various dissident groups that fall under the ‘queer’ umbrella, ignoring their differences. They also take the view that the proposed dissolution of identities is a mistake politically. Further to this, they note that much queer theory consists of what they see as an unnecessary and often rushed re-reading of French post-structuralism, which, they argue, has been traditionally assimilated first-hand by Spanish anthropologists (currently by the Ethnographic School of Tarragona) (2003: 14). Conversely, López Penedo (2003: 122) argues in her contribution to the same collection that, despite all its dangers and limitations, queer theory is less likely to erase identities than to problematize them – an argument I would agree with.

Mariquitas and Maricones

In his influential book about Spanish ‘gay society’, Oscar Guasch wrote in the early 1990s that those who refused to identify as gay fell under the category of the ‘*reprimidos*’ or ‘repressed’. This is a grouping that, he suggests, should

be unacceptable in post-Franco society, where gay people no longer have 'the excuse of fearing the association of homosexuality and perversity or effeminacy' (1995: 96). Guasch marks the beginning of the transition from the 'homosexual' to the 'gay' on the day of the first gay march in Spain in 1977 and sees it as tightly linked to the country's democratic transition (1995: 44). Despite its pronounced, almost self-debasing, anthropological and relaxed approach to theory, Guasch's book makes an important political contribution in its implicit criticism of the gay model as one that has been brought into Spain by foreign gay tourism and imposed by businessmen interested in financial gain. This model is thus entirely independent of any political activism in Spain itself, and also devoid of its original Anglo-American political implications. Private investors replaced public and free spaces of socialization such as parks and public toilets with private, costly ones such as bars and shops, a move that has not necessarily favoured all gays. Also, Guasch argues, the gay model (which he regards as a masculinization and apparent politicization of the homosexual (1995: 75) favours the masculine and young types at the expense of the older ('*carroza*') or the effeminate ('*loca*') ones that used to be common and accepted in what he calls pre-gay Spain and that have become highly stigmatized (1995: 93).¹⁰ Interesting also is Guasch's distinction between '*mariquita*' and '*maricón*', a binarism he explains in terms that are reminiscent of those exposed by Fuss (1991): 'identities are defined by affirmation but fixed by negation' (Guasch 1995: 52–3) [own translation]. Under this logic, the *mariquita*'s clearly effeminate manners serve the purpose of fixing his opposite, the virile (heterosexual) male and he is therefore unthreatening. The *maricón*, however, 'looks and acts like' any heterosexual male and therefore the awareness of his homosexual practices are a real threat for his heterosexual counterpart and could incite violence (1995: 54–6). The gay *macho* type which, like other authors, Guasch considers a North-American import into Spanish gay culture, also uses the *mariquita* to emphasize his virility and detests him as a heterosexual stereotype of the gay that he does not want to identify with (1995: 90–93).¹¹

Writing around the same time as Guasch, Aliaga proposes the use of *marica* and *maricón* as desirable political weapons of self-defence, in the same manner that *queer* worked as a symbol of pride in the Anglo-American context. His argument is that the lack of interest in finding a Spanish equivalent is indicative of the poor quality of debate around issues of identity amongst Spanish gays (in the 1990s). Indeed, the use of Anglo-American terminology in Spanish Queer studies has been a major debate for theorists. In *¿Entiendes?*, Bergmann

10 Aliaga and Cortés make a similar point about this type of gays (1997: 127–30).

11 See also Pablo Fuentes's intervention in Aliaga and Cortés (1997: 219) and, for a much more humorous but equally telling account of Spanish 'gay types' see Alas (1994).

and Smith draw on Guasch, and argue that *entender* is a good Spanish alternative to queer and has a similar potential as it is ‘a cultural, not a natural category’, it is about ‘knowing rather than being’ and it is ‘not identity but an activity’ (1995: 12). Unhappy too with the use of foreign concepts such as ‘the closet’ (often translated literally as ‘*el armario*’) in the Spanish context, Martínez-Expósito has proposed alternative terms traditionally used in Spanish gay subcultures, such as ‘*entender*’ or ‘*la acera de enfrente*’, arguing that ‘both offer extraordinary epistemological possibilities that are often more fruitful’ (1998: 32) [own translation]. As mentioned earlier, Guasch and Viñuales have also expressed disagreement with the adoption of what they regard as essentially North-American queer theory into Spanish contexts (2003: 14).

The politics of assimilation that used to dominate most gay associations in Spain has also been an important concern. Aliaga has argued that this strategy only contributes to a sort of dissolution of ‘gay’ into the dominant heterosexual sameness, hence his emphasis on ‘difference’ (Aliaga and Cortés 1997: 46–7). The difference he proposes is one that contemplates the diversity and heterogeneity within itself (1997: 55), namely gender and racial diversity, as his co-author Cortés specified later (1997: 96). For Cortés, the need of a collective identity is a necessary step in the gay struggle. Yet, the ‘difference’ that he talks about is imaginary and, as such, strategic and provisional: ‘it is not about being gay’, he writes, ‘it is about being gay in a repressive society’ (1997: 116), and he adds that the difference will disappear with the end of repression. One of the main problems of dominant heterosexist discourses, for Cortés, is their favouring of masculinist power and their phallocentrism, which problematizes affectionate and non-competitive relationships between men. Furthermore, the absorption of these masculinist ideals by global sectors of the gay community has also contributed to the gradual disappearance of alternative, localized and more political gay ‘identities’. These issues had been already described by Hocquenghem as a major obstacle for the social acceptance of homosexuality in capitalist society:

Homosexual sublimation provides the solid ideological basis for a constantly threatened social unity. Capitalist society can only organize its relationships around the jealousy-competition system by means of the dual action of repression and sublimation of homosexuality; one underwrites the competitive rule of the phallus, the other the hypocrisy of human relationships (Hocquenghem 1993: 105).

Cortés’s proposed solution in the early 1990s, then, was to recuperate those modes of behaviour regarded as weak and emasculating (passivity, vulnerability and public display of affection) and thus reinvent ways of living and loving friends and partners. In my view, this happy medium resolves some of the

existing conflicts between the different positions described in this chapter: the necessity of a separate identity becomes a way of coming to self-knowledge, of achieving self-representation, visibility and resistance. Yet, this ‘identity’ will have to be conceived as provisional, unstable and multiple.

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