



THE HOMOSEXUAL BODY: RESOURCES AND A NOTE ON THEORY

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From its very beginning, the debate was intimately intertwined with an all-encompassing discussion on 'nature' versus 'culture' or, in today's terminology, 'nature'/'nurture'. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the meaning of both categories changed as well and along with it the status of homosexuality It is a crucial device therefore for a successful gay history to be integrated not only in a narrative of repression and persecution, but also in a purely intellectual history of all-encompassing debates such as the one on the nature/culture dichotomy. Further, a somehow independent science of the human body started to develop which, in the long run, was to substitute an ethical approach for a positivist and allegedly 'empirical' discussion of racial biology and hierarchic physical anthropology. Yet, no matter how powerful the logic of either one discursive paradigm, homosexuality in its mononymic status of referring to a larger order was to be evaluated alternatively positive or negative since neither the 'ethical' nor the 'medical' vantage point involved a clear boundary between the field of nature as opposed to culture.

Rudi Bleys, 1988¹

At the beginning of Davenant's play *The Cruel Brother* one of the characters points to the evidence of a certain Lucio's influence with the Duke and what he points to are the Duke's public embraces of him. (Davenant *Works*, ed. Maidment and Logan Vol. 1, 1872, pp. 119-120) In a society where most people slept with someone else in conditions that lacked privacy, where the rooms of houses led casually one into the other and servants mingled with their masters, who someone slept with was a public fact and a potentially meaningful one, for beds . . . are places where people talk and where favours can be solicited, for oneself and others. To be someone's 'bedfellow' in the letters and gossip of the time suggested influence. It could also indeed suggest sexuality, but it did not need to.

'That night in a dream,' Archbishop Laud noted in his diary on 21 August 1625, 'the Duke of Buckingham seemed to me to ascend into my bed, where he carried himself with much love towards me, after such rest wherein wearied men are wont exceedingly to rejoice; and likewise many seemed to me to enter the chamber who did see this.'

Archbishop Laud's dream is of his patron the great Duke of Buckingham but the point of the dream is in its conclusion, that the mark of favour he was dreaming of was public.

Alan Bray, 1988²

In the first trial for sodomy we have in the archives of the Inquisition (in 1547) the Archbishop of Lisbon noted with scandal that 'there is evidence that a house or certain houses and persons exist which are taken up with the abominable crime of sodomy'. . . . It was especially in the houses of *fanchonos* that the sodomitical subculture bloomed and used a rich code of gesture and oral communication: the silk veil on the neck, some coloured and costly ribbons on the tunic, one more long tail on the cape. These were details in the clothing that enabled gays to identify each other. Several of those denounced plucked their eyebrows, but it was by the use of a lock of hair that *fanchonos* were principally differentiated. A *Moco de gadelha* (a youth with a lock) appears in some trials as a synonym for a homosexual, or, in the Inquisitor's slang, 'a sign of bad manners'.

Luiz Mott, 1988³

Normal sexuality, in bourgeois views, could only exist between a man and a woman when they engaged in sexual contact according to their natural state which was defined as active and dominating for the male and passive and receptive for the female partner. Crossing of the sex and gender boundaries thus set was regarded as contrary to nature and its purpose. Effeminacy in men and virility in women was frowned upon. From treatise on the physiological, moral and literary aspects of woman by the doctor Virey (1825), we learn that sexual energy can only be generated between two different poles, the masculine man and the feminine woman. A masculine woman could never be loved by a man: he would feel as if he committed a sin, just like he would feel repugnance if he was with another man. The same applies to an effeminate man: 'In fact, a hermaphrodite or androgyne, whose two opposite needs, that of giving – the masculine – and that of receiving – the feminine – would continually be fulfilled and neutralized, would not feel any desires', and: 'By the same reasoning the masculine woman, having too many male qualities in her constitution, has a tendency to throw herself back on her own sex as if to effeminate herself and thus regain her natural

qualities'. Procreation is thus endangered according to Doctor Virey by the diminution of the energy of each sex. Thus debauchery, saturation, and polygamy all weaken the sexual energy and make men and women turn to each other in 'infamous vico' (for men) and 'disorderly passions' (for women).

Dorelios Kraakman, 1988⁴

There seems to have been a spate of convictions at the end of the seventeenth century and in the 1720's, coinciding significantly enough with morality crusades and the emergence of a distinctive male homosexual subculture in some of the larger cities. And there appears to have been an increase in persecutions in the first third of the nineteenth century when more than 50 men were hanged for sodomy in England. In one year, 1806, there were more executions for sodomy than for murder, while in 1810 four out of five convicted sodomists were hanged. The law appears to have been particularly severe on members of the armed forces, where it was often employed with particularly dramatic and exemplary results. In 1811 Ensign John Hepburn and Drummer Thomas White were 'launched into eternity' before a 'vast concourse of spectators' including many notables and members of the Royal Family Efforts to remove the death penalty for sodomy were generally unsuccessful. Sir Robert Peel reaffirmed it in his reforms, in 1826; and when Lord John Russell attempted to remove 'unnatural offences' from the list of capital crimes in 1841 he was forced to withdraw through lack of parliamentary support.

Jeffrey Weeks, 1981⁵

The first edition of (Krafft-Ebing's) *Psychopathia Sexualis* was seen by him as a modest intervention. But it immediately evoked both professional approval and a popular response. Like many writers on sex since, he found himself deluged with letters and information from the sufferers of sexual misery and the targets of sexual oppression. *Psychopathia Sexualis* grew, as a result, from 45 case histories and 110 pages in 1886 to 238 histories and 437 pages by the 12th edition of 1903. His success encouraged many others: between 1898 and 1908 there were over a thousand publications on homosexuality alone. In his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, published in 1905, and itself a major stimulus to the growth of sexual theory, Freud acknowledged the contribution of nine writers: Krafft-Ebing, Albert Mull, P.J. Mobius, Havelock Ellis, Albert Shronck Notzing, Leopold Lowenfeld, Albert Eulenburg, Twan Bloch, and Magnus Rirschfeld. To these could be added a host of other names, from J.L. Casper and J.J. Morean, to Cesare Lombroso and August Forel, to Valentin Magnan and Benjamin

Tarnowsky, names scarcely remembered today, . . . but significant shapers of the modern discourses of sexology.

Jeffrey Weeks, 1985⁶

Ah! those patently deprived, noxious, flaccid, gross womanish beings! Perverted and imperfect in moral nature and even in their bodily tissues! Those homosexual legions that are the straw-chaff of society, good for nothing except the fire that purges the world of garbage and rubbish!

Xavier Mayne, 1908⁷

Citing cases of known physical hermaphrodites, Ulrichs pointed out that, just as nature's 'rule' is not always followed in the differentiation of the sexual organs, so too the differentiation of the sex drive may vary from the usual rule. He concluded:

"What is present in germ can also develop. But each primary embryo bears in itself potentially developable testicles, penis, body cavity, capable of growing into scrotum, and along with this the germ of a potential psychical development of a feminine sex drive. Furthermore creating Nature does not succeed in making every creature according to rule. That is the key to the riddle of Uranian (homosexual) love".

Ulrichs apparently accepted without question the idea that love directed toward a man must be a woman's love, and he saw it as a confirmation that he could detect 'feminine' traits in himself and other homosexual males (for example, gestures, manner of walking, love of bright colours) . . . This later idea was expressed more clearly in the phrase *anima muliebris virili corpore inclusa* (a feminine soul confined by a masculine body).

Hubert C. Kennedy, 1981⁸

The increase of these monsters in the shape of men, commonly designated margeries, poofs, etc. of late years, in the great Metropolis, renders it necessary for the sake of the public that they should be made known . . . Will the reader credit it, but such is nevertheless the fact, that these monsters actually walk the street the same as the whores, looking out for a chance!

anon, late 19th century⁹

One surveyor, having measured the body builds of some forty-four homosexual men and one hundred and eleven heterosexual men, concluded that there were indeed physical differences. In particular, Evans (1972) found that although homosexuals and heterosexuals were about

the same height, the heterosexuals were very significantly heavier than the homosexuals – there was an average difference of 6.25 kilograms One study by F.E. Kenyon (1968) found (in a survey of 123 lesbians and a similar number of controls) that: ‘The three measurements which significantly distinguish lesbians from controls are weight, waist, and bust. Lesbians are heavier, with bigger busts and waists Qualifying these findings, a slightly more recent study of forty-two lesbians by a group of British researchers found that lesbians are taller rather than shorter, although if anything the evidence was that lesbians tend to be more ‘solid’ than heterosexuals.’ The only striking finding was the visual impression that the lesbian subjects mostly looked older than their age, and sometimes strikingly so (Griffiths et al. 1974).

Michael Ruse, 1988¹⁰

Consider for example the history of what was once ‘the’ great sin against nature. The extreme discretion of the texts dealing with sodomy – that utterly confused category – and the nearly universal reticence in talking about it made possible a twofold operation: on the one hand, there was an extreme severity (punishment by fire was meted out well into the eighteenth century, without there being any substantial protest expressed before the middle of the century), and on the other hand, a tolerance that must have been widespread (which one can easily deduce indirectly from the infrequency of judicial sentences, and which one glimpses more directly through certain statements concerning societies of men that were thought to exist in the army or in the courts). There is no question that the appearance in nineteenth century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and sub-species of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty, and ‘psychic hermaphroditism’ made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of ‘perversity’; but it also made possible the formation of a ‘reverse’ discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or ‘naturalness’ be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified.

Michel Foucault, 1978¹¹

Finally we will examine a paper from the journal *Neurology* by F. Flynn, E. Popek and M. Maccario from San Francisco. It is a case study describing a: ‘Change from homosexual to heterosexual behaviour during a seizure in a patient with the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome’. The authors state:

‘. . . Changes in sexual drive and preference have been described in brain injury, seizures and after temporal lobectomy. Heterosexual behaviour developing during a seizure in a previously neurologically in-

tact homosexual has not previously been reported A 58-year-old man with AIDS who had no previous history of heterosexual behaviour approached a female in mixed company and attempted sexual intercourse with her. This was followed in minutes by a right focal motor seizure with secondary generalization. Over the next few hours, three additional stereotypic seizures occurred. CT was normal. EEG demonstrated a left frontotemporal focus. On phenytoin the patient had no further seizures. The patient resumed strict homosexual behaviour. A few months later, the patient died from necrotizing bacterial pneumonia. The brain at autopsy demonstrated diffuse subacute encephalitis caused by cytomegalovirus (CMV) The neural substrate of homosexual behaviour remains unknown. However, there appears to be a similar propensity for sexual preference change in homosexuals as in heterosexuals when there is a dysfunction of the frontotemporal or limbic areas'

This makes chilling reading indeed. Rich in metaphor, the article is at first sight only peripherally interested in AIDS. In fact, as a more careful examination reveals, AIDS here speaks so directly of homosexuality that it appears, as is often the case with long used metaphors, as a metonym for it. It is extraordinary though that the focus of concern in this paper lies not with the patient's very real suffering in the final stages of terminal illness, but with the possible neurophysiological basis of his sexuality. This palpably reflects continuing medical interest in the cause of homosexuality and speaks volumes of an essentialist view of sexuality. As for the claim that the patient had a sexual preference change because he approached 'a female while in mixed company'. This offers a particularly unappealing view of heterosexuality, which it defines strictly according to opposite sex object-choice and a fit induced assault! It is almost as if sexuality is little more than a variety of encephalitis. According to this mode of analysis, the boundaries of the distinct sexual types are so deeply inscribed in the nervous tissue of people that it requires a major seizure to re-align them.

Meyrick Horton and Peter Aggleton, 1989¹²

The long protracted debate about the rights and wrongs of homosexuals sidesteps – or even omits – the most important of all issues. The basic biological function of sexual relations is procreation: of that there can be no question. It can be, and usually is, a pleasure; but that is not its sole purpose, which would make it the equivalent of gluttony. It is high time that this old hedonistic view was put firmly in its place, like gluttony and excessive drinking. Consider now the claims of many homosexuals, that it is only 'natural'. Let us take Immanuel Kant's critique of what is to be considered natural: 'What would happen if everyone did it?' That would be the end of the human species in one or two generations! One patient I saw, before the present permissive legislation, was sent to me by the police. I had only taken his name

and address, before he burst out: 'Why is what I do any worse than what you do? The front-passage is just as dirty as the back way!' To my reply 'There is no future in what you do' he had no answer. In my long clinical experience as an analytic psycho-therapist, I have in the past cured more than one patient and motivated him to heterosexuality: abnormal deviation. Not now when the new trend is 'I'm as good as you are' and there is no call for any change. It reminds me of Aesop's fable about the fox who lost his tail to a trap. So he went about preaching to his fellow foxes, that they would all be better off without tails.

Dr H. Edelston, letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, 1988¹³

Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your rears. Writer says William Shakespeare was gay.

Britain's greatest writer William Shakespeare was GAY, a top academic claimed last night. Author David Avery reckons the man who created the character Bottom was a homosexual and penned his famous sonnets to a MALE lover. And experts admit Shakespeare may have been bisexual. They say all female parts in his plays were acted by young MEN dressed in frilly frocks But literary eggheads blasted the theory that where there's a Will there's a gay. Schoolkids everywhere know the Bard's bawdy quotes do NOT include:

- Beware the AIDS of March.
- Once more into the britches, deario friends.
- Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your rears.
- To be or not to be one, that is the question.

The Sun, 1989¹⁴

An AIDS patient shared his hospital bed with his lover for TWO months, it was claimed yesterday. A top-level inquiry was launched after outraged nurses found the two men snuggled up in a single-bed cubicle. And they claim the besotted boyfriend was booted out of the hospital after the guilty secret was discovered by a stunned ward sister. The scandal has rocked Manchester's Monsall Hospital where dozens of AIDS patients are treated in an isolation ward A hospital source said: 'The staff are outraged. They feel there has been a cover-up and want to make sure that this does not happen again'. COHSE official Eric Cooper said last night: 'We want to be humane towards AIDS sufferers, but this is bloody ridiculous'.

Daily Star, 1989¹⁵

What is said about sex must not be analyzed simply as the surface of projection of these power mechanisms. Indeed, it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together.

And for this very reason, we must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable. To be more precise, we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies. It is this distribution that we must reconstruct, with the things said and those concealed, the enunciations required and those forbidden, that it comprises; with the variants and different effects – according to who is speaking, his position of power, the institutional context in which he happens to be situated – that it implies; and with the shifts and reutilizations of identical formulas for contrary objectives that it also includes. Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it. We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. In like manner, silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions; but they also loosen its holds and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance.

Michel Foucault, 1978¹⁶

States should have the right to outlaw homosexual practices as a public health measure, according to almost one-fourth of physicians responding to a poll of internal medicine specialists about attitudes towards the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). Moreover, almost fifty-nine percent of respondents believe that homosexuality *per se* and sexual promiscuity of some homosexuals are primarily responsible for the AIDS crisis.

Internal Medicine, 1987¹⁷

In the discursive spaces thus rearranged around discourses of/on the body, a new alliance comes into being on the ruins of the old metaphysical edifice, between the 'soft' or 'human' sciences on the one hand and the 'hard' or 'exact' sciences on the other. Tributary of the crisis of metaphysics, the human and the social sciences will inherit some of its old mental habits, such as 'the transcendental narcissism' of the subject, and other forms of nostalgia for totality. They will also be able, however, to innovate by introducing new types of discourses which are structurally and genealogically connected to the crisis of modernity: psychoanalysis, ethnology, and the biosciences Modernity opens up this double shift of discourse about the subject: on the one hand, a shift away from the metaphysical unity postulated on a careful

balance of dialectically opposed dualistic oppositions ('the death of the subject'), and on the other hand, a shift towards a multiplicity of discourses that take the embodied subject as their target. This empirical-transcendental double-game is, for Foucault, the fate of modernity. The 'body' that emerges at the heart of this new discursive field is equally doubled up: on the one hand it is merely a living organism, meant as the sum of its organic parts. It is an empirical notion, the organ-ism being precisely an assembly of detachable parts, a complex field of integrated organs whose mode of inter-action can be studied in terms of functions, behaviour, etc. This notion of 'the body' at work in all the biosciences, derives from the classical discourse on clinical anatomy On the other hand, the body cannot be reduced to the sum of its organic components: it still remains the threshold for the transcendence of the subject. The discourse of psychoanalysis stresses this point: the body as libidinal surfaces, field of forces, screen of imaginary projections, site of constitution of identity. As such, it is derived instead from the metaphysical debate about (the loss of) the unity of the subject . . . there is no consensus among the human and social sciences as to what exactly the body is. Important divergences exist between the discourses of the biosciences, psychoanalysis, and the law – to name only three – as to what exactly the 'body' is.

Rosi Braidotti, 1989¹⁸

Of course homosexuals think they are OK – they would, wouldn't they? For what man does is always right in his own eyes – or else he wouldn't do it, would he? But if homosex [*sic*] isn't considered immoral, then what is? Murder? Rape? Abortion? Buggery? Oh silly me! Buggery *is* homosexual isn't it? So I view homosexuals with the kind of vague loathing that I view terrorists.

Dr T. Russell, *General Practitioner*, 1988¹⁹

The profound consequences of HIV infection might have been expected to suppress the expression of a homosexual lifestyle in younger men. Our findings however, show no decrease in the proportion of men who entered this lifestyle after the threat of HIV infection became apparent.

Brian A. Evans et al. *British Medical Journal*, 1989²⁰

. . . about 10 days ago I went down to the White House and I visited with the President. I said, 'Mr President, I don't want to ruin your day, but I feel obliged to hand you this and let you look at what is being distributed under the pretence of AIDS educational material The President opened the book, looked at a couple of pages, closed it up, and shook his head, and

hit his desk with his fist. Obviously I cannot describe the book in any detail; but for any Senator who is seriously interested in finding out whether I am exaggerating, I will make a copy available to him or her . . . on May 1, 1986 to be precise, the Gay Men's Health Crisis received the first part of the 2-year \$674,679 grant to which I alluded earlier. The grant proposal upon which the grant was made laid out in great detail how the money would be spent. Let me read the guarantee's statement of the problem:

'As gay men have reaffirmed their gay identity through sexual expression, recommendations to change sexual behaviour may be seen as oppressive. For many, safe sex has been equated with boring, unsatisfying sex. Meaningful alternatives are often not realized. These perceived barriers must be considered and alternatives to high-risk practices promoted in the implementation of AIDS risk-reduction education'. . . This Senator is not a goody-goody two-shoes. I have lived a long time. I have seen a lot of things. I served 4 years in the navy. I have been around the track. But every Christian, religious, moral ethic within me cries out to do something . . . And the subject matter is so obscene, so revolting, that I am embarrassed to try to discuss it . . . Oh what a great expenditure of the taxpayer's money. In session 3 of this great educational effort by the Gay Men's Health Crisis . . . entitled 'Social Skills Development', 'activities' included 'asking someone for his phone number, meeting someone new at a bar and . . . negotiating a contract for safe sex, discussing your sexual limits . . . the second year project . . . included a 'Dating and Intimacy Workshop' entitled, 'Getting To Know Another Man'. This was for participants who found it difficult to meet, open up and form relationships, homosexual relationships, 'where they would feel comfortable practicing safe sex'. I will not consume the Senate's time reading the details of this revolting project. But Mr. President, you know those little bags they have on airlines when it gets bumpy. If I were to read the sickening details to you, Mr. President, you would need one.

Senator Jesse Helms, *Congressional Record*, 1987²¹

There appears to have been an additional, deep-rooted folkloric dogma at work that doomed efforts by gays to associate with one another or with their fellow sufferers. In his reminiscences, Hoess observed that 'even if they were in poor physical shape, they always had to indulge their vice'. It wasn't only Hoess and other SS rulers who presumed that homosexuals always had sex on their minds and were forever bent on seducing heterosexuals. The inmates themselves also tended to regard gays as men for whom nothing was more important than their genitalia. After all, that was why they were jailed, that was what distinguished them from all other prisoners . . . Thus, when gay inmates tried to join a clandestine camp commit-

tee, they were rejected. Both Nazi overseers and their prisoners took it for granted that the men with the pink triangles were somehow biologically programmed to seek nothing but sexual satisfaction.

Richard Plant, 1987²²

Until the fall of 1938 the homosexuals at Buchenwald were divided up among the barracks occupied by political prisoners, where they led a rather inconspicuous life. In October 1938, they were transferred to the penal company in a body and had to slave in the quarry. This consigned them to the lowest caste in camp during the most difficult years. In shipments to extermination camps, such as Nordhausen, Natzweiler, and Gross-Rosen, they furnished the highest proportionate share, for the camp had an understandable tendency to slough off all elements considered least valuable or worthless. If anything could save them at all, it was to enter into sordid relationships within the camp, but this was as likely to endanger their lives as to save them. Theirs was an insoluble predicament, and virtually all of them perished.

Eugen Kogon, 1968²³

Perhaps the most feared assignments were to a detachment marked 'Medical Experiments' . . . the number of homosexuals used for these pseudo-medical undertakings was disproportionately large. Consider the hormone experiments administered in Buchenwald by the Danish endocrinologist Carl Vaernet with the German surgeon Gerhard Schiedlausky . . . I have singled these out because he used homosexual inmates exclusively . . . The hormone tests, however, can stand as a model for virtually all of those tests carried out by the Nazis on their human guinea-pigs . . . Although the documents mention the names of only five men selected at the start of 1944, a later entry notes the names of ten gay subjects. Another gives the names and numbers of seven gays selected for castration and hormonal 'rebirth' . . . on October 1, 1944, a group of seven homosexuals was operated on, and a second group, consisting of eleven more, on October 10 . . . Some subjects became ill; some, it seems, must have died, because new names appear on the rosters of those actually castrated . . . No final report has survived that notes the results of the experiments on the castrated men.

Richard Plant, 1987²⁴

That at the war's end, in 1945, so few were able and ready to come out and testify cannot be explained alone by the fact that so few survived . . . According to German law, homosexual ex-prisoners were to be treated as criminals . . . some American and British jurists of the liber-

ation armies, on learning that an inmate had been jailed and then put into camp for homosexual activities, ruled that, judicially, a camp did not constitute a prison. If, therefore, someone had been sentenced to eight years in prison, had spent five of these in jail and three in camp, he still had to finish three years in jail after liberation . . . none of the lucky few who came out alive was granted any compensation when the new post-war West German government, bowing to American pressure, set up a cumbersome but functioning legal bureaucracy to grant restitution to political, Jewish, and other selected inmates.

Richard Plant, 1987²⁵

Health Minister David Mellor recently followed up the observation that as many as one in four gay men in London may have been infected – in this estimate perhaps a quarter of a million – with the comment that: ‘People must not breathe a sigh of relief and think it will soon blow over’. I hope I do not have to enlarge on the truly terrifying implications of that statement. Suffice to say that it is tragically clear that large sections of the population of Britain are not officially regarded as ‘people’ at all.

Simon Watney, 1989²⁶

Journal science, the world of the esoteric experts, is a form of personal exchange whereby elite members signal the possible entry of new ‘facts’ into the established world of science. By way of contrast, *vademecum* or handbook science is clearly a more authoritative discourse. Inclusion in this world, which is intended for general experts, signals the consolidation of knowledge. Already, the form of its production and its controversies have been lost. Popular science is a highly complex social field. These texts, intended for the ‘educated amateur’, offer a clear authoritative voice from the thought-collective. The critical division this sphere marks out is that between expert and popular knowledge. The epistemology of this kind of popular knowledge is understudied but clearly needs to be elucidated. Textbook science on the other hand represents the zone of initiation into a thought-style. In ‘AIDS’ knowledge, this area needs to be closely observed. Readers on AIDS as introductory texts are increasingly appearing. The general form that these textbooks take is authoritarian. They serve to introduce the novice into a *Weltanschauung* in which not only are old or commonsense facts viewed differently, but new ones actually appear. The content of these texts reveal the ‘evident facts’ of a given thought style. An analysis of textbook science is therefore likely to indicate the dominant features of the emergent AIDS research paradigm.

Meyrick Horton and Peter Aggleton, 1989²⁷

Non-government AIDS service organisations are praised in public by government ministers, yet prevented from undertaking fully effective Safer Sex education in a period of ever-increasing state censorship. The government has also set its face against all forms of health education rooted in the hated concept of community development, whilst a leading spokesman for the Medical Research Council which supervises HIV/AIDS related biochemical research has publicly stated that he believes that treatment research raises a 'moral dilemma' since it might: 'prolong the lives of people who would be infectious in the community'.

Simon Watney, 1989²⁸

Looking at the young men who are coming out in the age of AIDS, I'm struck by the fact that they are still coming out. Is there some smaller number of young men arriving into our community than there would have been before? I can hardly discern it. I can only see the numbers growing, the young men still seeking, the quest being continued. Many of us who are my generation seem to be ravaged by the sexual changes brought about by the epidemic much more than those who are following us. We're aware of what we've lost. They're aware of what they can still discover What is most striking to me is that this new generation has learned the new forms of sexuality and is still able to use sex and celebrating sex as a way to find community. There's exploration going on, which informs us that youth still want that exploration for themselves I believe that the salvation of our sexual history and our erotic imaginations is one of the greatest challenges we have ever faced. The transformation of our movement into a multi-generational community is another. They can be interconnected, but they also need to be looked at separately. We who are older and more experienced need to look at the *obligations* of gay men to our youth. We need to resurrect and honour the concept of role models which was so important to the early gay movement . . . always remember that the essential isolation of gay men from others has been caused by our sexuality and our expression of our sexuality. We not only overcame that through heroism – and the word is not too dramatic; it's true; we are heroes – but we became magicians; we performed alchemy and turned our forbidden sexuality into cement, the bindings of community. Sex cannot be banished from our lives We need to continue to explore, in different paths, of course, but not with a lessening of our passion and our excitement. Young men need to learn from us what sex has meant; we need to inform them even more of what potential it still holds for them – and even still for ourselves. We claimed our erotic imagination for ourselves and our community and we need to affirm it as a valued part of our history.

John Preston, 1988²⁹

NOTES

... as long as feminist theories of ideology work with a theory of representation within which representation is always a representation of reality, however attenuated a relation that may be, the analysis of sexual difference cannot be advanced because reality is always already apparently structured by sexual division, by an already antagonistic relation between two social groups. And thus the complicated and contradictory ways in which sexual difference is generated in various discursive and social practices is always reduced to an effect of that always existent sexual division In terms of sexual *differences* . . . what has to be grasped is, precisely, the *production* of differences through systems of representation; the work of representation produces differences that cannot be known in advance.

Parveen Adams, 1979³⁰

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3. Luiz Mott, "Portuguese Pleasures: The Gay Subculture in Portugal at the Time of the Inquisition" *Homosexuality, Which Homosexuality?* (Conference Papers, Free University, Amsterdam, 1987), 91-93.
4. Dorelios Kraakman, "Sexual Ambivalence of Women Artists in Early 19th Century France" *Homosexuality, Which Homosexuality?* (Conference Papers, Free University, Amsterdam, 1987), 171.
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7. Xavier Mayne, Imre, 1908. Quoted from Neil Bartlett, *Who Was That Man? A Present For Mr Oscar Wilde* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1988), 248.
8. Hubert C. Kennedy, "The 'Third Sex' Theory of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs" in Salvatore J. Ricata and Robert P. Petersen (eds.) *Historical Perspectives On Homosexuality* (New York: Haworth Press, 1981), 105-106.
9. quoted from H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Other Love: An Historical and Contemporary Survey of Homosexuality in Britain* (London: Heineman, 1979), 120.
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25. Richard Plant, op. cit. (22), 181.
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28. Simon Watney, "Safer Sex as Community Practice" in P. Aggleton et al. (eds.) *AIDS: Individual, Cultural and Policy Dimensions* (Lewes: Falmer Press, 1990).
29. John Preston, "Gay Men and Sex in the Eighties" *Mandate*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (New York, April 1988), 87.
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A NOTE ON THEORY



“The homosexual body” is a discursive, fantasmatic object that may only be thought or identified at specific, concrete conjunctures of the social and the psychic. Sexual object-choice is not inscribed in the organic body prior to or independently of the cultural signs that desire may stencil, or that sexual behaviour may wear into the body’s surfaces. Yet the notion of a “homosexual body” is pervasive, and the construction is not self-evidently contradictory beyond the fragile discursive field of psychoanalytic theory. This already suggests much about the ways in which the ‘knowledge’ of sexuality, and the ‘knowledges’ of other sciences may lock together to protect themselves against the intrusion of an inconvenient reality that might threaten their power to define the body’s truth. “What body?” asks Roland Barthes: “We have several of them; the body of anatomists and physiologists, the one science sees or discusses But we also have the body of bliss consisting solely of erotic relations, utterly distinct from the first body”.¹

In all its discursive/institutional variants, “the homosexual body” functions as a fantasy of containment, fixing mobile, unstable desire in the fleshy ‘evidence’ of the corporeal. Thus “the homosexual body” locates homosexual desire as a visible secret of another type of body, *the species of the homosexual*. Gay identity is thus understood to derive from a discrete population of “homosexual bodies”, collectively inhabiting their fantasmatic social avatar, “the homosexual lifestyle”. If we replace “homosexual” with “heterosexual” in such formulations (“the heterosexual body”, “heterosexual bodies”, “the heterosexual lifestyle”), the ideological and political significance of the “the homosexual body” becomes clearer. However, Freud’s audacious assertion that: “in man the sexual instinct does not originally serve the purpose of

reproduction at all, but has as its aim the gaining of particular kinds of pleasures”² remains dramatically at odds with the wider Freudian therapeutic project.³ As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has pointed out:

Freud’s study of Dr. Schreber shows clearly that *the repression of homosexual desire* in a man who by any commonsense standard was heterosexual, occasioned paranoid psychosis; the psychoanalytic use that has been made of this perception, however, has not been against *homophobia*, but against *homosexuality*.⁴ Given our experience of the *institution* of psychoanalysis, it is hardly surprising if many lesbians and gay men have been reluctant to engage with recent debates drawn from the literature of psychoanalysis. Nor should such reluctance be casually dismissed as “resistance”. None the less, psychoanalysis provides the only available body of developed theory by which we may understand the coherence and significance of “the homosexual body” as a fantasy-object, projected onto only too real bodies. As Leo Bersani has argued: “Freudian theory serves the most constraining cultural enterprises in its statements about the history and nature of human desire, at the same time that it outlines the operations of desiring fantasy in ways which explode its own narrow view of the ‘natural’ shapes and rhythms of desire.”⁵ In these terms, sexual identity is not a simple, natural given, but a complex *result*, and far more open-ended than is often imagined, constituted across the axes of sexuality and gender in specific cultural and classed circumstances. It is thus, always, a site of struggle and conflict, individually and socially. The question that needs to be answered concerns the processes by which identities forged from the social experience of homosexual desire are widely regarded as if they derived directly from the body itself – as if desire were immediately and *visibly* calibrated in physical anatomy.

Victor Burgin has emphasized that: “Freud made it clear enough, in various parts of his work (see his discussions on voyeurism, fetishism, and psychogenetic disturbances of vision) . . . that unconscious desire operates in our looking and being looked at.”⁶ “The homosexual body” represents just such a disturbance of vision, whether “exposed” on the anatomist’s slab, incarcerated in prison, or “portrayed” in film or photography. It becomes thinkable, and thus visible, as soon as categories of sexuality are dehistoricized and naturalized on the part of “heterosexuality”. I do not say “heterosexuals”, because properly speaking, heterosexuality is *not* an identity. Indeed, there is a close connection between the complex processes by which “heterosexuality” may be experienced and lived as an identity, and the notion of “the homosexual body”. Taking itself for granted, “heterosexuality” remains largely oblivious to its own object-choice, and is inhabited in a variety of ways, in the identities of parenting, of domesticity, of sexual fantasy, gender, and so on. It is only when the coherence of the ensemble of

roles and relations that constitute “heterosexuality” are perceived to be at risk, that object-choice emerges as a primary term for individual identification – an identification moreover that is overwhelmingly *negative*, and defined by exclusions, repudiations, displacements and denials.⁷

The actual threat however, is not external to “heterosexuality”, but internal, and may derive from a wide range of unconscious wishes, or revulsions, that cannot be consciously sanctioned or articulated since they might conflict with (heterosexual) object-choice. “The homosexual body” thus emerges as a substitute-formation, in the logic of which an intolerably desired or dreaded object is substituted for another, which it resembles by a chain of associations.⁸ If we consider the physical characteristics of the “homosexual body” we may begin to trace back these chains of associations to their repressed origins, to what has been replaced. “The homosexual body” is invariably constructed *in excess* or *in lack*. It is always either hyper-masculine or hyper-feminine, a forceful presence of great potential danger and strength, or an enfeebled, effeminate body, yet threatening in its very weakness.

The emergence of the modern categories of sexuality has permitted the emergence of a “governmentality”⁹ that increasingly aligns power, the state, culture and the law with “heterosexuality”, understood as a uniform, monolithic structure, bound by rigid conventions of gender and sexual conduct. It should go without saying that this “governmentality” is as ill-fitted to many “heterosexuals” (the single, the divorced, the celibate, etc.) as it is to lesbians and gay men, who are positioned beyond the confines of the “the social” in a shadowy hinterland of *The Perverse*. This of course closely resembles all that this “governmentality” has itself repressed. Sexuality thus becomes an increasingly arbitrary structure of knowledge, and the identities it generates are carefully nurtured in a state of paranoid anxiety concerning both gender and sexuality, since *all* same-sex relationships are potentially pathologized. A society that can only conceive the love of men for men, and women for women as “homosexual” is heading for serious psychological trouble, and that trouble is visited most evidently on actual lesbians and gay men, who must pay the price for being what their “heterosexual” families most fear and dread in themselves. This is not to repeat the argument that a supposedly unified “homophobia” expresses and articulates repressed *homosexual* desires. On the contrary “the homosexual body” usually speaks of displaced anxieties and ambivalences concerning the body and its potential for sexual pleasures that are precisely founded in *heterosexual* desire, but “heterosexuality” cannot articulate.

NOTES

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3. see Simon Watney, "Psychoanalysis, Sexuality and AIDS", in S. Shepherd and M. Wallis (eds.) *Coming On Strong: Gay Politics and Culture* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).
4. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Introduction" *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosexual Desire* (New York: Columbia, 1985), 20.
5. Leo Bersani, *A Future For Astyanax: Character and Desire in Literature* (London: Marion Boyars, 1978), xi.
6. Victor Burgin, "Re-reading *Camera Lucida*" *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 83.
7. see Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia, 1982), 6.
8. see J. Laplanche and J-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1983), 434.
9. see Michel Foucault, "On Governmentality" *Ideology & Consciousness* 6 (1979).