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**Revisiting The Queer: Theory, Literature and Gay Male Studies.**

by

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This work has not been previously submitted in whole or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to and quotation in this mini-thesis, from the work, or works of others has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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### **Abstract:**

The main inspiration for a revisit to the topic of homosexuality is not only its noticeable absence from the UCT English curricula, but also the publication of the first Fundamentalist Christian text with a South African slant: The Pink Agenda: Sexual revolution in South Africa (McCafferty and Hammond 2001). Forms of opposing this homophobic view were needed for the gay community. This required an investigation into the academic debates about homosexuality: mainly the social constructionist versus the essentialist debate. During the course of this debate's illustration, cultural myths concerning homosexuality are challenged. The focus is on where the author saw gaps in knowledge that would not have gone unchallenged in other gender studies, such as African homosexuality. The debate is illustrated in the cultural academic theories in which it is usually represented: theoretically in historical, sociological and anthropological studies. After a look at the terminology used in homosexual studies and their implications, the essentialist/social constructionist debate is introduced, inside and outside the academy. Although the perception is that gays have more acceptance to gain from biological essentialism, this is not necessarily the case. Yet, constructionism can also be misused by implying that homosexuality is a choice. This would also imply that heterosexuality is a constructed choice. Such debates challenge Fundamentalist homophobia and expose its contradictions. Hirschfeld and Ulrichs, as essentialists are then contrasted with Freud as a constructionist, to show how this debate developed, and that essentialists may view homosexuality as degenerate, and that constructionists may support gay rights, as a future challenge to assumptions. The section on gay history focuses on theories of social constructionists, such as Mary McIntosh, Michel Foucault and the essentialist, Rictor Norton. The section deduces that social constructionism has not proven that there were no homosexuals before the nineteenth century, although the behavioural roles of individuals may have been perceived differently. Similarly the section on anthropology and homosexuality in Africa, shows that homosexuals recognisable to modern, Western homosexuals were present. The African section focuses on the changing perceptions of African sexuality, the issue on whether certain cultural practices can be judged, and whether transgendered, age-based or egalitarian models are comparable to Western forms of homosexuality. The conclusion is that

homosexuality is common to all human cultures. The concluding section assumes a more radical position, and attempts a synthesis of literature, queer identity and activism.

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### Opsomming:

Die belangrikste motivering vir hierdie herbesoek aan homoseksuele teorieë is nie net die opmerklieke afwesigheid daarvan in die UK se Engels departement nie, asook die publikasie van die eerste Fundamentalisties Christilike teks met 'n Suid-Afrikaanse aanslag: the Pink Agenda. Strategieë moes gevind word ten einde hierdie homofobiese aanval en siening van die gay gemeenskap te opponeer. Hierom is daar veral gekyk na akademiese debatte oor homoseksualiteit en veral die sosiaal-konstruksionistiese versus die essensialistiese debatte. Kulturele mites en opvattinge oor homoseksualiteit word hier aangespreek. Die fokus is waar die skrywer hiante in aannames sien (soos onder andere oor Afrika homoseksualiteit) wat nie in *gender studies* kritiekloos aanvaar sal word nie. Hierdie debat, tussen konstruksioniste en essensialiste word in historiese studies, sosiologie en antropologie teoreties weergegee. Die terminologie word in sowel die akademie as in die populêre kultuur bekend gestel. Ofskoon die opvattinge bestaan dat gays meer aanvaarding kry binne die biologies-essensialistiese debat word die teendeel hier bewys. Aan die ander hand kan die konstruksioniste ook misbruik word in hul siening dat gay- wees gewoon 'n keuse is. Sodanige debatte bevraagteken Fundamentalistiese homofobia en ontmasker die teenstrydighede. Hirshfeld en Ulrichs, as essensialistiese teoretici, word teen Freud gestel ten einde aan te toon hoe konstruksionistiese teoretici gay-wees as afwykend sien. Sake word verder geproblematiseer deur konstruksioniste se ondersteuning van gay-regte. Die afdeling oor gay geskiedenis neem die teorieë van sosiale konstruksioniste soos Mary McIntosh, Michel Foucault en die essensialistiese denker, Rictor Norton as uitgangspunt. In hierdie afdeling word die afleiding gemaak dat sosiale konstruksioniste nie kan bewys dat daar geen homoseksualiteit voor die negentiende eeu bestaan het nie. Tog kon gedragpatrone van individue as "anders" beskou word. Ook in die afdeling oor antropologie en homoseksualiteit in Afrika word aangevoer dat erkende homoseksualiteit vir Westerse homoseksuele bestaan het. In die Afrika afdeling word klem gelê op die veranderende persepsies oor Afrika seksualiteit soos byvoorbeeld of sekere kulturele uitinge en praktyke veroordeel mag word en of inter-geslagtelike-, ouderdom-gespesifiseerde - of gelykheidsmodelle vergelykbaar is met Westerse vorme van homoseksualiteit. Die afleiding wat ten slotte gemaak word, is dat homoseksualiteit

bekend is aan alle kulture. In die slothoofstuk word 'n radikale posisie ingeneem en daar word probeer om 'n sintese te vind tussen letterkunde, queer identiteit en aktivisme.

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### **A General Introduction: Some Issues and Observations in Contemporary Gay Studies.**

Lesbian and gay studies constitute a vastly multi-disciplinary field. Although this may also be true for other fields, such as feminist studies, or post-colonial research, the available approaches to homosexuality are especially fecund. Contributions to this field include the social sciences and psychology; the branches of humanities, including historiography, anthropology and literary studies; and the scientific fields of genetic research. Because homosexuality is regarded as a moral issue by several religious groups; ranging from Judaism, Islam and the vast number of Christian denominations, themes in religious studies are also relevant. The physical sciences are an area that no longer feature significantly in the humanity fields, except when the racist perceptions of historical eugenics, or physical anthropology are deconstructed. For lesbian and gay studies biological and genetic issues remain relevant, as the cause for a homosexual orientation is regarded by both the gay and homophobic lobbies as crucial to self-identity, and the basis for allowable civil liberties for homosexuals. The nature or nurture, biology versus social conditioning; or the essentialist versus constructionist debate, has dominated scientific and literary theory since the late 1960s. Both sides seek proof from history and cross-cultural studies, and make sweeping claims proclaiming the opposite camp's lack of evidence. This has led to an academic squabble, that has had notable moments of dismissive attack and retribution, obviously influenced by the personal passions gay theorists pour into their work. It has long not been established which side of the scale is weighted by more evidence, or which approach may lead to better strategies to combat homophobia, and improve the well-being of homosexuals. Both approaches have made valuable contributions to the understanding of the homosexual dilemma, and through a personal reading both can be reconciled as useful, although this may be theoretically incorrect. How such approaches may be read also depends on what homosexuals should achieve, either a quiet attempt at an equality that makes life bearable, or a radical attempt to overthrow the inequalities inherent in heterosexist society in an alliance with radical liberationists and feminists. Homosexuals may choose to assimilate with heterosexual society, by demanding marriage rights or even founding churches, or they may celebrate the liberties and alternative identities that being gay can offer. To the true homophobe it is irrelevant whether gays want to

assimilate or remain isolationist. To the Nazis a “Jew was a Jew”, and to the racist a “black remains a kaffir”, be he a beggar or Nelson Mandela, similarly, especially to the religious homophobe, a homosexual remains perverted and sick until he “converts” to heterosexuality. Terms avoided by open religious rhetoric, yet complicitly supported thereby, are employed by the “macho” homophobe, who makes it clear that every queer is a “filthy faggot”. Even assimilationists therefore often remain isolated from straight society in gay enclaves, with separate social spaces. This situation may be chosen and preferred by those homosexuals who find straight society prejudiced, unsupportive and alienating. In the academy the gay student, or student interested in lesbian and gay studies, may find that despite the wide field and the impressive canon of literature, theory, film and research available, he can spend his entire undergraduate career without encountering the topic. The postgraduate student is faced with somewhat of a detective story, and probably gravitates towards homosexual supervisors and professors. The question arises whether the wider academy finds the topic too contentious; or whether it is presumed that the majority of students are simply not interested. Either way, gays are often accused of being exclusionist or isolationist, yet they often cannot escape this situation. In theoretical terms, two broad approaches thus arise: the focus may be on studying the oppression of homosexuals by a homophobic society; or it may be on the study of gay culture and desire itself. The two streams however overlap considerably, as gay culture has largely been formed as a reaction to oppression, and heterosexual society has formed its various reactions to gays by its interpretations of sexuality, especially same-sex desire.

The gay culture that has been formed in the Western world has for many centuries been characterised by a coded secrecy, “and for a long time such codes and symbols have remained restricted to small groups of the initiated for the ‘love that dared not speak its name’, in Wilde’s famous phrase, has been so long condemned to remain hidden by masks” (Higgins 1993:15). Yet, from classical times to the current age, there are few areas of Western civilisation that were not contributed to by those who practised homosexuality; individuals that many modern gays would not hesitate to identify as “queer”. From the Greek philosophers like Plato, to Michelangelo, Wittgenstein and Proust, the list of significant historical figures is exhaustive, and the biography industry continues to open historical closets. The fragmented nature of gay and lesbian studies is influenced by the ubiquitous occurrence of homosexuality across eras, cultures, classes and even species.

The question is to what extent such diversity in same sex behaviour can be interpreted as a continuum with contemporary gay identity. This all-pervasiveness, although it is not always visible, is threatening to the heterosexual world-view, that since the introduction of the “great” Judaic, Christian and Islamic religions regards male and female attraction for the purpose of procreation as God-ordained and natural. The interpretations of these religions and their legacies have inspired various attitudes to the “queer problem,” from punishing homosexual acts, erasing evidence of gay desire, “compassionate” attempts at healing or orientation conversion, and lastly to allow a tacit acceptance of homosexuality when confined to a marginalised, stigmatised minority. The last approach seems to be a compromise reached after the failure of the previous attempts to obliterate or cure homosexuality. Society seems to have come to an understanding that the removal of the homosexual would also be the erasure of a great deal of human potential. When confronting homosexuality Western culture sees a threat to the power-structure that has relied on the strict division of gender roles, and the effeminate male who consciously rejects masculine privileges and perceived responsibilities is deeply threatening. The underlying threat is that everyone has some same sex desire, and that homosexuality may erupt, spreading like an infectious disease. Those who believe that homosexuals can be changed, must also accept that heterosexuals can be converted to homosexuality, which must therefore be contained. Homosexuality is therefore especially threatening in homosocial environments, such as the military, in which “normal” men are most likely to experience same-sex attraction. Although the argument should not be overstated, there is some truth to the concept that those who are most homophobic are repressing same sex desires themselves. The main nerve of homophobic anxiety is exposed when the homosexual minority asserts its presence in public. Homosexuals are often accused of making an unnecessary public display of themselves, that is perceived to impact negatively on public morals. The paradox here is that homosexuals have only gained a more favourable position in society through public activism. Krouwel and Duyvendak write:

...many political scientists will simply state that sexual behaviour or orientation is not to be considered ‘public.’ Yet, religious and political public institutions have attempted for centuries to regulate the most intimate expressions of human nature, such as sexuality, and condemned,

prosecuted and murdered 'sodomites.' These institutions thereby ordained (homo)sexuality a public matter. (Krouwel and Duyvendak 2000:113)

Although by no means the only homophobic group, the most visible at present are the global representatives of the American Christian Right. This particular sect, or collection of sects, will be focused on in this essay. One of the main features of these groups is a belief in being "re-born" or "saved" by the invitation of Jesus into the convert's life. Furthermore they believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible, employing a common-sense reading where they can, "but where it is necessary to preserve the Bible's inerrancy, they will resort to all kinds of non-literal interpretations" (Gifford 1991:96). Their current form arose during the 1970s, with the fusion of the American New Right with the religious right (Gifford 1991:10). A recent text that attempts to bring the American "debate" between Christian Fundamentalists and "homosexualists" to South African shores is The Pink Agenda: Sexual Revolution in South Africa and the Ruin of the Family (McCafferty with Hammond 2001). This text sums up the beliefs and attitudes of the most current and relevant homophobia, and is worthy of a response. It is ironic that that the very Fundamentalists who so vocally condemn, especially public manifestations of homosexuality, also draw attention to it. A main accusation against homosexuals is that they have hijacked undeserved public media coverage. On page 58 a cartoon is featured that depicts a delighted mass of journalists focusing on two soldiery figures representing "SA Gay Rights," while a press-man comments to his colleague: "Isn't it amazing how such a small group can generate so much interest?" This is ironic, considering that after periodic coverage featuring the changes in South African legal attitudes to gays after 1994, homosexuality has largely withdrawn from media visibility. Only annual events like the "Gay Pride" march, or the "Mother City Queer Project" still generate a footnote. It is indeed the Fundamentalist Christians who keep the topic alive and controversial, and The Pink Agenda itself generated a brief flurry of media support or outrage, before it was relegated to the back-shelves of the Christian bookstore. Although the South African public seems largely disinterested, this may not remain the case as the propaganda of the Christian Right is spread by *The Trinity Broadcasting Network*, and their elaborate fund-raising events, which are disguised as spiritual self-improvement sermons. At present the Fundamentalists actually hijack gay events, as the

photographs of Christian protesters holding vigils after the Sydney Mardi Gras, against gay tourism in Cape Town, and outside a gay adoption case in Bloemfontein demonstrate (McCafferty and Hammond 2001: 79, 152). The Bloemfontein protest “generated 19 media interviews”, and readers are encouraged and instructed on how to use radio discussions to spread Fundamentalist propaganda (McCafferty and Hammond 2001:150). This deflects negative media coverage that Fundamentalists have recently received after Rhema’s Ray McCauly’s bitter divorce (a practise ironically disapproved of by Fundamentalists), unforthcoming miracles in Nigeria, the Christian connection in the tragic Hansie “the devil made me do it” Cronjé saga, and reports of torture and death at the Noupoort Christian rehabilitation centre. The Pink Agenda does however point to a problematic and interesting tendency to attach identities and groups that could be regarded as separate entities to the gay cause, such as transvestism or bisexuality, or even paedophilia:

Just like homosexuality has been the platform for transsexuals, sadomasochists and foot fetishists, you can be sure paedophiles are beating the door down. (McCafferty and Hammond 2001:116)

Although this is alarmist, since paedophiles who desire pre-pubescent girls and boys have hardly “beat the door down”, the relationship between homosexual and heterosexual transvestites is a significant one. The difficulty with writing about homosexuality is that one may be defining or redefining stereotypes and methods of categorisation. This can be dangerous, because since the labelling of the “homosexual”, “intolerance created its quarry” (Manguel 1994:xix). A prejudice confines “a heterogeneous group of individuals whose single common denominator is determined by the prejudice itself”, and this can create a warped sense of logic, as Manguel writes:

No logic governs these choices: prejudice can couple an Indonesian lawyer and a Rastafarian poet as “coloured people”, and exclude a Japanese businessman as “an honorary white”; revile an Ethiopian Jew and an American Hassid, yet pay homage to Solomon and David as pillars of the Christian tradition; condemn a gay adolescent and poor Oscar Wilde, but applaud Liberace and ignore the homosexuality of Leonardo Da Vinci and Alexander the Great. (Manguel 1994:xix)

Foot fetishists and sado-masochists are not deemed relevant enough to categorise them as separate sexual identities, as rigidly as homosexuality and heterosexuality. They have neither been legislated as such. Both gay or straight men can exhibit such fetishes. What The Pink Agenda attempts is a coupling of “shocking” fetishes and perversions with homosexuality, through debatable statistics and generalisations. This argumentation is however questionable on two broad accounts. Firstly the information is not contrasted properly with heterosexual practices, which also feature coprophilia, paedophilia, anal sex, sado-masochism and multiple partners. The authors seem to describe “heterosexuality” as married partners who do not engage in adultery, which is a ridiculously sanitised representation, even within Christian communities. Secondly the authors standardise “gay” behaviour, which means that many homosexuals cannot identify with the “lifestyle” described (neither can their family or friends). Homosexuals form a diverse group of individuals without one “agenda”. All that homosexuals have in common with each other is a desire for the same sex, as Manguel points-out:

The infinitely varying shapes and shades of sexual desire are not the pivot of everyone’s life, yet gay people find themselves defined through that single characteristic - yet their physical attraction to others of the same sex - notwithstanding that those who attract them run the entire gamut of the human male - tall, short, thin, fat, serious, silly, rough, dainty, intelligent, slow-witted, bearded, hairless, right-wing, left-wing, young, old - with nothing in common except a penis. Once defined by this grouping, the quarry can be taunted, excluded from certain areas of society, deprived of certain rights and sometimes arrested, beaten, killed. (Manguel 1994:xix)

With such diversity amongst homosexuals one can never speak for all, although, at least in Western countries, a concept of gay culture does exist. This is not characterised by uniform sexual practices though; nor by strict political affiliation. It is rather a recognition of a gay cultural sensibility, to which some homosexuals feel affiliated.

The relationship between gay men and lesbians is also significant. As the title of this essay suggests, it will concentrate mainly on gay male issues. This is not because lesbians are considered separate from the gay community, or that lesbian experiences are irreconcilably different to those of gay men. The main reason is that limited space requires a particular focus. Much of the lesbian experience has sided more with the women's movements, which has resulted in a range of separate debates between heterosexual and lesbian feminists. Yet, the feminism that questions the heterosexist power-structures also holds important lessons for gay men. Stevi Jackson, for instance, reminds gay men that their campaign in Britain for an equal age of consent, from nineteen to sixteen, was simply demanding the consent age for heterosexual women. Gay activists should rather have questioned the disparity between the ages of consent - eighteen for men; sixteen for women - which was designed to give heterosexual men access to younger women (Jackson 1999:156-157). Gay men are thus seeking "equality" in an unequal society.

Joseph Bristow explains that lesbian women and gay men may have little in common, as they are separated by the distinction of gender. Their shared attraction to the same sex, or their homosexuality, has however connected their experiences:

Lesbian and gay designate entirely different desires, physical pleasures, oppressions, and visibility. The mark of gender, given the cultural violence and the inequalities of power it sets in motion, is perhaps the most important distinction placed between lesbians and gay men. But both subordinated groups share parallel histories within a sexually prohibitive dominant culture, and these have inevitably brought us into the 'and' that both links and separates our sexual-political interests. Homosexuality is the word we are still all too often made to share, even though it is one we have jointly learned to subvert and resist. This unhelpful and misleading sexual, legal, medical and ultimately moral classification has for decades compounded our differences, and in its exceptionally inflexible implementation it has served to mask a great many confusions about sex, gender, and sexuality that saturate western culture...No matter how we situate the modernity of this concept, homosexuality denies the gendered difference between men and women who desire their own sex. It produces sameness where there is not necessarily any at all. Only when modified

by a sexual definition - male homosexuality or female homosexuality - can the distinction between lesbians and gay men be understood, and even then only within the severe limitations of an opposition between the sexes. (Bristow 1992:3)

The term *homosexuality* refers to same sex activity and desire, and as it is non-gender specific, it has so far referred to lesbians and gays. It is useful because it refers to the behaviour, without necessarily referring to self-identified homosexuals. Heterosexual men or women in prison may engage in *homosexuality* without being *homosexuals*. For the purpose of this essay it should be pointed-out that *gay* refers to male homosexuals. Obviously *lesbian* refers to the female version of *gay*. *Queer* like homosexual is non-gender specific, but it implies a radically politicised approach that is only used for a sardonic effect at this stage of the essay.

Bristow further explains that lesbians and gays are popularly imagined as opposites, or reflections of one another, with images of “virile women and effeminate men” dominating the press (Bristow 1992:5). The legal position of lesbians and gays has historically not been the same. Because of Queen Victoria’s conviction that lesbians did not exist, English law reduced the penalty for male homosexual acts from death to imprisonment in 1861, but the “new law made no mention of lesbianism” (Russo 1981:5). In Germany the law forbidding homosexuality, Paragraph 175, similarly “omitted any mention of lesbians” (Russo 1981:5). Other views of female sexuality possibly also played a role here, such as women’s lack of a penetrating organ, without which the Victorians probably could not imagine sex. Nevertheless, when lesbianism became apparent, it was relegated to the same social restrictions as male same sex partnerships:

Whatever our differences, then, we have historically been regarded, as it were as twins. And since the law still insists on banishing our desires in almost the same breath - from public spaces, from school classrooms, from the involvement in child custody, fostering and adoption, and so on - it is not surprising that many of us have been led to make alliances with each other. Lesbian and gay criticism is one such outcome of the violence that has been done to us. (Bristow 1992:4)

It is impossible to completely avoid references to lesbians or feminism, in an essay on gay issues, even if this was desirable. Much of the theory in gay studies developed from feminism, especially the social constructionist versus the essentialist debate. Lesbians have “played a prominent role within feminist campaigning since the 1960s, they have been instrumental in developing methods for investigating the cultural work of gender, the normative presuppositions of psycho-analysis, and the masculine biases of historiography” (Bristow 1992:4). Gay men in comparison, have worked from a less advanced base of theory, and have had much to learn from over two decades of feminist scholarship (Bristow 1992:4). The question of who is entitled to speak for what grouping, remains sufficiently nagging to encourage this author to focus on the experience of his own male homosexuality, especially as lesbian studies are well represented by female authors.

Other fields that require detailed study, or even personal experiences are similarly rather left to those who wish to focus on them. The religious references will therefore focus more on Fundamentalist Christians, with whom the author has had two years of personal experience, rather than on homosexuality in Islam, Judaism, Hinduism or Catholicism. These issues are just as relevant though, especially for homosexuals who come from countries or communities where these religions are personally experienced. The references are therefore mainly the descriptions of Western observers, which remains somewhat problematic. This should not become a rigid categorisation though, and lesbianism or Islam are included when considered relevant. Discussions of non-Western homosexuality are important for the debate between essentialists and social constructionists. A dissertation on homosexuality written in contemporary South Africa would be incomplete without discussions on African homosexuality, especially as cultural arguments are increasingly employed by political and religious homophobes to deny African gays their very right to exist. African homosexuality is especially relevant, as it has largely been ignored by research, and has become a political tool of various homophobes. This topic reveals some of the racist myths, and how certain perceptions of African sexuality arose. That the term “culture” usually reflects a very narrow, selective conception is illustrated here; similarly to the abuse of the term “nature,” which usually refers to a narrow, specific construction of nature. Both terms are misused to unfairly bash homosexuals, by claims that homosexuality is “not part of African culture”, or by claims that homosexuals “go against nature”. Research exists to dispel

such myths, which are regarded as perfectly logical by many of the heterosexual majority. These traditional homophobic arguments are recycled by The Pink Agenda, which can easily convince many of the Fundamentalists' more outrageous claims, as many heterosexuals are already half-convinced that homosexuality is unnatural, possibly because the thought of gay sex acts is revolting to them. McCafferty and Hammond make sure that the reader is fully exposed to private sex acts, including the most esoteric perversions. Quoting other Fundamentalists' "research" they inform the reader that 80 per cent of gays ingest faeces through rimming, while:

Others eat and or wallow in faeces. Homosexuals engage in oral-penile contact with almost all their sexual contacts (and ingest semen from half of these)...The forearm may be shoved through the rectum into the colon. Other objects and small animals may also be inserted. (McCafferty and Hammond 2001:21)

Although gays may view such descriptions as laughably exaggerated, it becomes apparent how such writing can change the concerned, uninformed individual into the misinformed, homophobic individual. Interestingly lesbian sex acts are omitted in The Pink Agenda. Perhaps this is because the authors are aware that lesbianism may seem attractive to many heterosexual males, and its description might even sexually arouse this audience. Manguel writes:

...lesbian images are accepted - in fact, encouraged - in heterosexual male pornography, the fantasy being that these women are making love among themselves in expectation of the male to come. The heterosexual male code of honour is thereby safe. (Manguel 1994:xvii)

The study of homosexuality therefore challenges the hypocrisy in society concerning gender. Gay male sexual behaviour is imagined in the most disgusting terms available, while non-threatening acts like mutual masturbation are largely omitted. The aim of this dissertation is however not one of bombarding readers with statistics and generalisations that would form the opposite of "information" like The Pink Agenda. It neither

wishes to present a sanitised myth of homosexuality, an image that would somehow justify the acceptance of gays. It does not want to claim that presently gays are extremely oppressed; nor that gay oppression and homophobia do not exist. South Africa has enshrined gay equality into its Constitution, and this dissertation is not a plea for law reform, but particularly targets the homophobia of the religious right. The main thrust of this dissertation is theoretical. The essentialist versus the social constructionist debate touches on the very meaning of being a homosexual, and has the potential to embrace all the main views and issues on this topic. It therefore forms the basis of much that is written. Homosexuality is such a broad subject that it is difficult to decide on what is most relevant. Exhaustive histories of homosexuality have been written, and some authors illustrate their arguments with seemingly endless examples. A text such as The Pink Agenda is an excellent way into some of the issues, as its sweeping statements allow one a response. Although McCafferty and Hammond make questionable deductions from historically and geographically specific research, and they have a tendency to quote biased information from American Fundamentalist “family research” organisations, The Pink Agenda is effectively well written. There is certainly an activist streak running through this dissertation, that imagines an uninformed audience. Yet it cannot claim to have “all the facts”. The difficulty is one of balancing literary or theoretical themes with historical and sociological facts. Dispelling cultural myths is part of the intended project.

## **Chapter One: The Terminology of Desire.**

Before the broader themes of essentialism and social constructionism are discussed it should be pointed-out that those literary historians and critics who seek an understanding of the past are themselves caught up in cultural mythologies (Hammond 1996:4). These mythologies are present in the terms used by literary critics, historians and gay activists. The widespread contemporary adjective used for self-description is “gay”, which referred to female prostitutes or “loose” women in the nineteenth century. Applying this term to homosexuality before the 1970s “implies historical discontinuities which are actually debatable” (Hammond 1996:4). The term gay was much debated as a new label for homosexuals, as Seymour Kleinberg wrote:

Most “gays” are unhappy with the label, although no-one is miserable about it...For all its limitations, “gay” is the only unpompous, unpsychological term acceptable to most men and women, one already widely used and available without automatically implying something pejorative. (From Seymour Kleinberg The Other Persuasion: 1977 cited in Higgins 1993:204)

Kleinberg’s grammatical objections to “gay” were that it sounded awkward as a noun, and over polite as an adjective to emphasise “gay men and women”. A former editor of Gay News, Alison Hennegan regarded gay as an improvement on the medical implications of homosexual:

“Homosexual” is medical in origin, pathologising in tendency, imposed from the outside and, linguistically speaking, a pseudo-Graeco-Roman mess. “Gay” is self-chosen, affirms its own mental health and, linguistically speaking, is plucked from the heart of the language, for which its enemies can never forgive it (as in “They’ve stolen our beautiful word”). (Alison Hennigan in the New Statesman: 1983 cited in Higgins 1993:204)

The appropriation of the word “gay” was not regarded as positive by many, such as the “progressive historian” Keith Thomas, who argued that “to endow it with a wholly different meaning is to deprive

ourselves of a hitherto indispensable piece of vocabulary and incidentally to make nonsense of much inherited literature". To reinforce the double meaning between its traditional meaning as "exuberantly cheerful" and its sexual meaning, Thomas asks: "Are we now to think that the child that is born on the Sabbath day is blithe and good, bonny and - endowed with an erotic preference to its own gender?" (Thomas in the New York Review of Books:1980 cited in Higgins 1993:205). Despite the misunderstanding possible due to the popularisation of the double entendre, it was possibly the only replacement for "homosexual", as "gay" was already a term used in the subculture long before the 1970s:

The historical origins of this meaning of the word are somewhat dubious. "*Gai saviour*" meant "poetry" in the thirteenth-century Provençal, and, as some troubadour poems were explicitly homosexual, it is possible that the word came to designate this particular aspect of their repertoire. Other inquisitive etymologists have traced its origin to Old English, where one of the meanings of the word "*gal*" was "lustful", as in modern German "*geil*". Whatever the sources, by the early twentieth century "gay" was commonly used in English homosexual subculture as a password or code. Nowadays, "gay" or "*gal*" is the usual term for "male homosexual" in French, Dutch, Danish, Japanese, Swedish and Catalan. (Manguel 1994:xvii)

Publicly "gay" meaning "male homosexual" entered the English language of North America in the 1939 film *Bringing Up Baby*: "Naked except for a fur-trimmed negligée and waddling about in bare feet, Carey Grant announced to an enquiring May Robson that he was thus attired because he had gone "gay" (Manguel 1993:xvii). Interestingly this initial public reference connected "gay" with elements of transvestism. Whatever the merits or difficulties inherent in the use of "gay", it did not resolve the binary opposition between homosexual and heterosexual:

The words "homosexual" and homosexuality seem to have originated in 1892 in translations by C.G. Chaddock from the German works by Krafft-Ebbing, "heterosexual" arrived at the same point, and heterosexuality in 1900...It is interesting to note that "heterosexual arrived

simultaneously with “homosexual”, as if it needed the latter for its own definition: only when the homosexual was defined for medical and social purposes as someone other than the norm did that norm itself come clearly into view. (Hammond 1996:4)

In subsequent terminology “straight” became to “gay” what heterosexual was to homosexual.

“Sodomy” and “buggery” were terms already present in medieval English, and are still favourites of the religious homophobes, especially as “sodomite” is used in the *King James* version of the Bible, and is understood by them to mean gay. Yet, it was used in the “Renaissance by Protestant writers denouncing Catholic practices, who thus associated one particular sexual activity with those forms of worship and doctrine which they saw as perversions of the truth (Hammond 1996:5). Although “sodomy” is regarded by the authors of The Pink Agenda as referring to anal sex between men in sixteen indexed references, the term was historically used to mean “anal intercourse between a man and a woman, intercourse between a human and an animal, and any physical contact between two males which resulted in ejaculation” (Hammond 1996:4). One of the proposals in The Pink Agenda is the re-introduction of anti-”sodomy” legislation, to prevent “sodomy” from being “flaunted” in public, although the public has hardly been confronted with mass displays of anal sex (McCafferty and Hammond 2001:147). The term homoerotic implies feelings rather than acts, especially denoting “the admiring, desiring gaze which one man may direct at another, or the images which elicit such a gaze”, and is “therefore particularly apposite for literature which articulates longing but rarely describes consumption” (Hammond 1996:5). Another term, “homosocial” refers to those same sex settings where the homoerotic becomes dangerously close to “healthy” concepts of friendship, bonding, admiration and camaraderie. This is where homosexual longings threaten the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable forms of love that may become obscured:

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in her book Between Men introduced the word “homosocial” to describe that intense male bonding which characterises so many dominant groups in modern society. There may be a tenable distinction between the homoerotic and the homosocial, but are they part of a continuum or sharply opposed? At what point does one man’s admiration of another’s masculine

physique and prowess pass into desire for sexual possession? The boundary between admiration and desire is often rigorously policed, which points to an anxiety that the distinction may be unstable. Clear dividing lines between the homosexual, homoerotic and homosocial are often blurred or reworked in literary texts, whose primary function as works of art is indeed to refine and enlarge our commonplace modes of perception. (Hammond 1996:5-6)

The American gay movement in the 1950s existed formally only as the “Mattachine Society”, which published the purely informative ONE newsletter (“From the quote ‘A mystic bond of brotherhood makes all men one’ by Thomas Carlyle”), and in the homoerotic *Physique Pictorials* originating with the photographer Bob Mizer and his “Athletic Model Guild” (Hooven 1995:60). Photographs of semi-nude men were allowed by censors only when they inspired “ideals of health - mental and moral as well as physical - and not for anyone’s mere enjoyment” (Hooven 1995:60). The homosexual gaze was disguised superficially by emphasising the sporting aspect of two men touching. In one photograph of two wrestling hunks Hooven’s commentary reads: “Because this photograph for instance was published in 1957 and if Prater and Norman had been embracing instead of wrestling, everyone would have been arrested for pornography and perversion, but since they were trying to kill another, it was okay” (Hooven 1995:130). The homosocial institution of sports must themselves be rendered heterosexual through “healthy aggression”. Protecting youngsters from information on homosexuality is a key aim of *The Pink Agenda* (McCafferty and Hammond 2001:153-154); yet the fact that contact sports like Rugby regularly cripples and kills boys does not raise a Christian eyebrow. Manguel further point-out the homoerotic meanings found by homosexuals in sports, that are simply ignored as such by heterosexual society:

Like the world of the adventure stories “for boys”, the traditionally male world of sports has become carefully purified of any erotic connotations. Men touching men, male bodies on male bodies...the sweaty intimacy of the locker rooms - all the iconography, in fact, of gay pornography - all of this is strenuously proclaimed to be fiercely heterosexual. Gay athletes are regarded as

oxymorons, and events such as the Gay Games are seen as profoundly disturbing because they challenge a key heterosexual symbol. (Manguel and 1994:137)

Andrew Sullivan describes in his autobiographical chapter "*What Is a Homosexual?*" how the fifteen years old gay teenager experiences the locker room:

...when I was fifteen and getting changed in the locker room for the first time again with a guy I had long had a crush on. But since the vacation he had developed enormously...he was - clearly no longer a boy. In front of me, he took off his shirt, and unknowingly, slowly, erotically stripped. I became literally breathless, overcome by the proximity of my desire. The gay teenager learns in that kind of event a form of control and sublimation, of deception and self-contempt, that never leaves his consciousness. (Sullivan 1995:12)

In English colonial literature homoerotic attractions played a significant role, although they were usually disguised. They seem to play a paradoxical role in both cementing the Empire's men and in undermining it, particularly if the attraction occurred between the coloniser and the colonised. This represents the homosexual as a subversive traitor, an issue still relevant in the British armed forces today (Lane 1995:8). Also significant is the over-zealousness in conquering, caused by the repression and sublimation of homoerotic feeling by colonists like Rhodes. This repression is also reflected in the extreme cruelty that officers inflict on soldiers. The recognisable homosexual is subjected to the wrath of the repressed individual in authority. The South African "border story" of the 1980s also features this, especially Matthew Krouse's "*The Barracks Are Crying*". The Captain cruelly interrogates five thousand men to separate the "queers" for a special hell in Potchefstroom, which is intended to make them straight (Krouse 1993:123). Yet the Corporal in this miserable camp forces the narrator (Krouse himself) to "make a blowjobbie behind the wall" (Krouse 1993:129). In Shaun de Waal's graphic short-story *Jackmarks* the sixteen-year-old gay protagonist, Justin, experiences the hypocrisy of the 1980s Christian Nationalist education. Homosexuality is taboo, and Justin may not submit a sketch of a naked and bald Crucified figure, yet he witnesses the sadistic Afrikaans

teacher fondling himself before caning the class hunk (De Waal 1998:54-55). "To jack" means in schoolboy jargon to lash with a cane, but it also refers to masturbation. The act of Godly discipline is thereby exposed as a sexual act of power. For the authors of The Pink Agenda homosexuality is a moral choice; a desire on which need not be acted. The problem is that it is always acted on in some manner. For the repressed individuals they wish to create, the eventual outlet or manifestation hardly looks positive, considering historical literature. Furthermore they wish to unleash repressed individuals (with all the authority of the cane, if they had their way) on a sexually ignorant mass of children. This comes at a point when their "ex-gay" healing ministries have already been implicated in sexual abuse, as the next section will demonstrate. It would be interesting to discover at what point the enjoyment of male company or contact becomes a sin - after all, Biblically the difference between desire and behaviour is not clear-cut, which is inferred by the notion that "if your eye offends you; put it out".

## **Chapter Two: The Essentialist versus Constructionist debate: Inside and Outside the Academy.**

Since the late 1960s gay studies in the academy have been largely dominated by the debate between the essentialists and constructionists. This debate is worth examining in detail, as it touches on several issues concerning gay studies, especially gay history, gay identity as ethnicity, and modern attitudes to homosexuality. The debate also demonstrates the difficulties present in writing on sexuality by making fixed and authoritative statements and categories. It becomes apparent that as soon as a behaviour is categorised, several exceptions and variations are discovered. The essentialists would argue that individuals who are gay form a distinctive sexual minority that has existed throughout history and across cultures. Homosexuality from this viewpoint is caused largely by inherent biological factors, and the gay individual, whether sexually active or not, cannot change his homosexual desire. The social constructionists would allege that the coining of the term "homosexual", created the homosexual role as a separate category around which individuals have based their identities. Exceptions to this category, such as bisexual behaviour, or same sex experiences by "heterosexuals" and opposite sex behaviour by men identified as gay, supposedly demonstrate that homosexual identity is a relatively modern social construct.

Judith Schuyf writes that "social constructionism in the study of sexuality arose at the end of the 1960s out of two theoretical currents: American symbolic interactionism and French structuralism" (Schuyf 2000:64). Relations "between the individual and society, social forces and lived experience" are issues both currents are concerned with (Schuyf 2000:64). In French constructionism Foucault is the most important writer in the field of sexuality (Schuyf 2000: 64), while McIntosch (1968) and Weeks (1981) are amongst the most significant British constructionists, who "both focus on the nineteenth century as the period in which homosexuality was first conceptualised" (Schuyf 2000:64). Schuyf further expands on the constructionism of Michel Foucault:

Foucault wrote what he called an "archaeology of the present". For Foucault, sexuality is a construct of human imagination, a cultural artefact that changes with time. "Knowledge" involves talking about sexuality to other people; the subsequent effects of this talking Foucault designated as

“power”. By using the method of deconstructing different discourses about sexuality he hoped to uncover the power structures that had served to regulate human behaviour and led at the end of the nineteenth century to the search for the desire to know the “truth about sexuality” (*scientia sexualis*). One of the ways individuals could gain this truth was by self-examination of what they saw as their personal identity and subsequent confession...(Schuyf 2000: 64)

A fierce debate thus erupted “between the social constructionists and those who had maintained that there had always been homosexuals in history” who were referred to as “essentialists” (Schuyf 2000:64). This debate was often of a personal nature, rather than purely academic. Essentialists were regarded as backwards and uneducated by the constructionists (Schuyf 2000: 65). The neuroanatomist Simon LeVay, who assumes an essentialist position by researching possible biological differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals writes:

According to “strong” social constructionists, scientific researchers like myself, who have searched for the determinants of sexual orientation in the processes of individual development, are the victims of a crass literal-mindedness; we are like those biblical scholars of bygone days, whose idea of understanding Genesis was to figure out where the Garden of Eden was historically located. There is in fact so little common ground between the “strong” social-constructivist approach and that of biological science that little interaction between the two is possible. (LeVay 1997:56-57)

LeVay also describes a weaker form of social constructionism, “according to which individuals do have an intrinsic sexual orientation (possibly biologically caused), but this intrinsic orientation is far less relevant to human affairs than the ‘extrinsic’ orientation that people are assigned” (LeVay 1997:57). As an example of this constructivist form, he quotes from an essay titled “*The Construction of Heterosexuality*” by a Stanford University legal scholar, Janet Halley:

Halley writes: "The...class of heterosexuals is a default class, home to those who have not fallen out of it. It openly expels but covertly incorporates the homosexual other, an undertaking that renders it profoundly heterogeneous, unstable, and provisional. "Thus closeted homosexuals are indeed homosexual, but because society reads them as heterosexual their homosexuality is of little importance". (LeVay 1997: 57 quoting Halley: 1993)

LeVay further points-out that "weak social constructivism does not challenge the intellectual validity of research into sexual orientation so much as it challenges the relevance of such research to practical issues like gay rights" (LeVay 1997:57). According to weak constructivism what matters is not the inner feelings experienced by people or their private behaviour, "but the form in which they present themselves to the world or are identified by the world" (LeVay 1997: 57). LeVay claims that this form of constructivism is not at odds with Biology:

Yet even if one accepts the message of weak social constructivism, one can still make a case for the relevance of biology...sexual behaviour and self-identification nowadays correspond fairly closely to the direction of sexual attraction that an individual experiences, and the closet is a thing of the past for increasing numbers of gays and lesbians. Thus the study of what factors set up the direction of a person's feelings is becoming, to an increasing extent, the study of a person's behaviour and social status too. Biology and "weak" social constructivism may therefore be on converging paths. (LeVay 1997:57-58)

The post-1990s compromise between some forms of constructionism and essentialism does not seem to have been a significant feature of the earlier debate. If the essentialists were regarded by constructionist academics as ignorant of contemporary theory, the constructionists were accused of an academic elitism, and an exaggerated commitment to "trendy" theory. Wayne R. Dynes elaborates on this:

For those in the universities, there is the lure of participating in a prestigious academic fashion: the wave of “theory” generally of French origin as the names of Foucault, Derrida, Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari attest. The most common label for this bundle of trends, “deconstruction”, complements (though less exactly than would be ideally desirable) Social Construction. These continental approaches first took root in French, English, and other humanities departments of universities as an insurgents’ credo, the battle cry of graduate students and younger professors reacting against the entrenched old fogies of the establishment. Adhesion to “theory” thus bears the double cachet of meritorious service in class struggle (hence the bizarre notion that adepts of the elaborate jargon of these trends are somehow aiding the revolution) and also of rallying to modernity - or rather post-modernity (which is even better) - against creaky traditionalism. (Dynes 1990:234)

The academic theories and language of the constructionists ensured that their ideas remained limited to the university and its academics. Therefore Judith Schuyf writes that:

After well over fifteen years of debate on the essentialist/constructionist divide, we can see that the constructionist paradigm has largely carried the day, at least within intellectual circles. It has not, however, become part of “popular knowledge”, that is of the people at large, and has been taken up only reluctantly by parts of the gay political movement. (Schuyf 2000: 65)

The general lack of support for constructionism by the gay movement may be attributed to the assertion by gay people that “they were born that way” (Schuyf 2000:65). Far from being revolutionary, constructionists discount the experiences of gay people, and this point will be returned to again. It is sufficient to note now that it is not surprising that most gays would reject a theory that claims their sexual identity is a construct. This could imply that they choose to follow their homosexual tendencies, when they could also become heterosexual.

This argument is similar to that of Fundamentalist Christian sects, who believe that the Bible is opposed to homosexuality. Therefore God would never create a person who is born homosexual, and the blame for gay

tendencies is often put on the parents, who cause gender confusion in the child by detaching from it, or by not validating its expression of gender (Comiskey 1989:131). Other causes are sexual abuse (Comiskey 1989:137), or exposure to pornography leading to “spiritual bondage”, which implies demonic possession (Comiskey 1989:101). These Christian Fundamentalists claim that homosexuals can be healed, and various “ex-gay” ministries have been established by them. Carel Anthonissen and Pieter Oberholzer deconstruct the claims made by these groups in their book *Gelowig en Gay* (2001), which rejects homophobic interpretations of the Bible.

The most compelling indictment against “ex-gay” ministries is the testimony of “ex-ex-gays”, who have managed to break away from these sects. They make a powerful case for essentialism, and against religious pseudo-science. Anthonissen and Oberholzer write:

Die verhale van “ex-ex-gays” (mense wat genees was en nou nie meer is nie), word selde deur hierdie beweging in ag geneem of erken. Veral uit hierdie mense se verhale word die gevare, pyn en hartseer wat gepaardgaan met hierdie “sogenaamde” genesingsterapieë, duidelik. In ‘n soortgelyke “ex-gay” -studie is die verhale van 20 gay mans wat “genees” was, opgeteken. Daarna het 13 van hierdie mense “teruggeval” in die beleving en uitlewing van hul gay seksuele orientasie. Hulle het almal aan post-traumatiese stressindrome gelei wat onder andere onsekerheid, pyn en selfverwerping insluit, wat saamhang met die eksplisiete “oordele” en metodes van die terapie. Die meeste het hul verhale opnuut vertel, maar die “ex-gay ministries” het dit nie in hul “wetenskaplike data” verwerk nie. (Anthonissen and Oberholzer 2001:155)

Vicky Powell documents some of the activities and funding of the British “ex-gay” ministries, such as the *True Freedom Trust*, in the *Gay Times* article “*A Scandalous Web*” (Powell 1995:28-30). The organisation had been aware that one of its counsellors had been accused of caressing and fondling gay men who came to him for “healing”, but only bothered to investigate him after a public outcry several years later. Powell writes:

At least five men brought the allegations against Metcalf, three of whom went public in an ITV documentary, *The Big Story*, broadcast last month. They claim that between 1985-87 while they were being counselled in therapy sessions, Metcalf kissed, stroked, fondled them and became sexually aroused when he rubbed his groin against one of the men. (Powell 1995:30)

The British organisation was in close involvement with the American *Exodus* ministry “which has been accused of holding young gay men and lesbians in remote isolation and giving them intense ‘healing’ counselling at the request of their parents” (Powell 1995:30). These accusations came at a time when one of the founders of *Exodus* publicly discredited the organisation:

Michael Bussee, one of the founders and “healing counsellors” of *Exodus* in America in 1976, last month on British television condemned the work carried out by the organisation. Bussee who left his wife and married another man in 1979, is now a staunch campaigner against the “ex-gay” movement in the US and has apologised for any emotional damage his counselling may have caused any lesbians and gay men. He told the Los Angeles Times: “I just pray to God that none of these people we counselled committed suicide because of something we said”. (Powell 1995:30)

Powell mentions cases where patients had to spend fortunes for private counselling, “to get over their ‘therapies’”. Others attempted suicide or “carried out self-mutilation on their genitals after receiving ‘counselling’ from these ministries” (Powell 1995:30). Predictably *The Pink Agenda*’s authors not only hail such ministries as a success, they actively point “strugglers” to them (McCafferty and Hammond 2001:156). They also include contact numbers and addresses of such groups in the appendix, notably *TRAILBlazers Ministries* in Sea-Point and *Total Transformation* in Athlone (McCafferty and Hammond 2001:163-164).

In a *Cape Talk* radio interview of *The Pink Agenda*’s author, Christine McCafferty, her most repeated point was that people are simply not born gay, and one probably arranged caller to the show supported her by claiming to be an “ex-gay”, who was freed by Jesus from the “sin of sodomy and rebellion against God and nature”. This claim can however not be verified, as it would require an all-encompassing study of the

caller's past and present activities, and would require objective honesty from an individual whose world-view (and language) is tailored to fit a subjective Fundamentalist paradigm. The speaker then claimed that gays say they "are born that way" to gain sympathy and acceptance. She claimed that in her research she had found gay writers who admitted they had chosen homosexuality; or as she said earlier; this "filthy, diseased, unhappy, lifestyle". Although academic constructionism makes no such moral judgements about lifestyles, this episode demonstrates that constructionism can be misused or misinterpreted.

The Fundamentalist Christian sects are only a contemporary example of a plethora of religious groups, that attempted to persuade gays to turn to heterosexuality. Often they claim to "love the sinner; but hate the sin", a division between the individual and his behaviour that is almost congruent with constructionism. Ideas of recruiting youngsters into homosexuality, through seduction or sexual molestation, are still espoused as a type of folk wisdom. These are reflected in higher ages of consent for gays, or bans on material concerning gay issues in schools (see McCafferty and Hammond 2001:147). The presumption is that if being gay is not an inherent part of the individual's personality, it can surely be "learnt".

It should also be mentioned that Western science largely regarded homosexuality as an abnormality that could be cured. Countless cruel and sadistic methods were employed to produce "healthy heterosexuals", including brain surgery, hormone treatments, testicular transplants, and aversion therapies, such as electric shocks and emetics (LeVay 1997:93). These treatments all failed, and, needless to say, mentally and physically destroyed many lives. Their application only decreased in Western countries when the *American Psychiatric Association* removed homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses in 1973 (Anthonissen and Oberholzer 2001:145). With this in mind, it is understandable that the majority of gays would reject a constructionist theory that apparently questions the innateness, and unchangeable nature of their innermost being and desires. For the historian Rictor Norton, who takes an essentialist position to gay history, "a major problem with social constructionism is its foundation upon behaviourism, which has been used to defend attempts to change or convert homosexuals" (Norton 1997:32). However, Norton also writes that "an essentialist view can also be used to justify genetic research, and if a 'gay gene' is discovered society will no doubt attempt to eliminate or modify it" (Norton 1997:32).

Simon LeVay mentions studies, that show, with some exceptions, that “gay men in the United States today generally tend to claim that they were ‘born gay’” (LeVay 1997:6). A survey by the Advocate in 1994 demonstrated that ninety per cent of gay men believe they were born this way, “and only four percent believed that choice came into the equation at all” (LeVay 1997:6). He also points-out that “beliefs about the causation of homosexuality clearly do influence attitudes towards gay people”, and the findings of scientists in this field “will invariably be used by others in the ongoing public debate about homosexuality and gay rights” (LeVay 1997:5). Yet, despite such attitudes “gay rights should not depend entirely on finding out what makes people gay - in particular on proving that gays and lesbians are ‘born that way’” (LeVay 1997:2). Even if homosexuality was a chosen lifestyle, this should not “be a justification for discrimination and prejudice” (LeVay 1997:2). The “valuable contributions that gays and lesbians make to society” and the “victimless nature of homosexual relations” should be grounds to secure respect and protection from oppression for them (LeVay 1997:2).

The entire study of the causation of homosexuality shows a social bias, as heterosexuality is considered a “normal” state with no need for explanation (LeVay 1997:5). LeVay points-out that this bias may be because gays are regarded as unable to reproduce children:

Even with the best will in the world, it is hard not to think about the “cause of homosexuality” without implying that heterosexuality is the “normal” state that requires no explanation. Of course, the entire spectrum of sexuality is in need of explanation. But homosexuality is the stigmatised condition, the one that all the “fuss is about”. It is the condition that seems to flout one obvious function of sexuality, which is to produce offspring. So it is inevitable that attention be focused on its cause at the expense of the cause of heterosexuality or even bisexuality. (LeVay 1997:5)

The causes of homosexuality are linked with those of heterosexuality, because “whatever makes a gay person different from a straight person is the same thing that makes a straight person different from a gay person” (LeVay 1997:5). Therefore “if ‘gay genes’ make a person gay, then ‘straight genes’ make a person straight” (LeVay 1997:5). LeVay succinctly sums up this point when he writes that:

When we study homosexuality we are inevitably studying heterosexuality also, even if we do not always express it that way. (LeVay 1997:5)

The “fuss” made about homosexuality may demonstrate repressed insecurities in heterosexuals, and this would make gay studies particularly relevant for a wider audience. Post-colonial studies over the past two decades have shown how racist attitudes and laws were due to the sexual repression of the Victorian era, and to the European colonisers' projection of their own eroticism onto the native Other. Perhaps a similar argument could be made regarding homophobia, in which repressed homosexual attractions and insecurities about masculinity may play a significant part. George Weinberg points-out in his discussion on homophobia that “the mechanism of defending against an impulse in oneself by taking a stand against its expression by others” was labelled *reaction formation* by Freud (Weinberg 1973:11). In structuralist binary oppositions, what is “straight” can only be defined as such in opposition to what is gay. Homosexuality affects more than just the self-confessed gay minority, but addresses deep-seated anxieties present in masculinity. This may include *reaction formation* and repressed homoeroticism, but is not limited to this. Another cause of homophobia is “repressed envy” that is characterised by a prejudiced person harbouring an unexpressed idea about himself (Weinberg 1973:12). George Weinberg explains:

The dangerous constellation is of the form, *I am successful because I am thought to possess some particular attribute, but I fear I am deficient in it...The homosexual is felt to belie the importance of the attributes themselves.* The homosexual man does not seem to be saying, “I can do better with women than you.” He seems to be saying, “Your success with women isn’t nearly so important for happiness as you imagine. And look at all you’ve sacrificed for it.” Of “masculinity” he seems to be saying, “That attribute of yours means nothing! Here I am with no desire to possess it”. (Weinberg 1972:13)

Fundamentalist Christians seem particularly insecure in their concept of heterosexuality, by claiming that gays can “seduce” heterosexual individuals into their “lifestyles”. Homosexuals, by comparison, seem far less fragile in their orientation, and they fail to be successfully “seduced” into heterosexuality despite childhood socialisation, parental pressures, discrimination, religious rejection and attempts at conversion. It is therefore ironic that some Fundamentalists believe that heterosexuality is threatened by gay film festivals, marches or tourism.

Fundamentalist Christians regard heterosexuality as a natural, inherent sexual orientation, from which the traditional family unit of a husband and wife can produce offspring. Homosexuality is regarded as a sinful disorder, and not as an inherent orientation. But by arguing that heterosexuals can be influenced to become homosexual, or to engage in same sex behaviour, by gay visibility in education, popular culture or politics, they imply that heterosexuality is a rather fragile construction, and not a self-evidently, divinely ordained natural state. If this were not the case, Christians would not bother with anti-gay campaigns, such as the 2001 protest against gay tourism, or the homophobic media campaign by the Fundamentalist *His People* group on UCT campus. The latter focused on gays as child-molesters. Such campaigns usually focus less on the gay minority as a stable entity “to be saved”, but rather on the perceived dangers of spreading this lifestyle to heterosexual youngsters. The Fundamentalist evangelical speaker and author Rodney Seale, who gained a level of fame in 1980s South Africa for his travelling anti-popular music slide-shows, aimed mainly at high-school learners and educators, viewed homosexuality as one of the evils spread by rock music (along with other “social-ills” that disagreed with apartheid’s Christian National education, such as Satanism, Eastern religion, drug use, liberalism and Communism). Seale illustrates the above observations in his book Rock Musiek: Die reg om te weet, when he writes:

Homoseksualiteit moet in ‘n baie ernstige lig gesien word omdat dit ‘n sonde teen die natuur, teen die samelewing en teen god is. Homoseksuele probeer ook ander by hulle net van gebondenheid in te lok. Die groep Queen sing: “We (the homosexuals) are the champions”. Dit hou ‘n ernstige bedreiging vir ons kinders in. Hierdie Liedjie word algemeen as die “volkslied” van die Gay Liberation aanvaar. (Seale 1988:31)

In the United States, the traditional home of “reborn Christian” evangelical fundamentalism, “the Reverend Louis Sheldon, leader of the anti-gay *Traditional Values Coalition*” sums up modern religious homophobia:

Gender identity is something that happens in the environment. Now I think the genes and the hormones can have a bearing on that. But the gender identity, or gender identity conflict that happens to a homosexual, when they have a problem in their opposite-sex attraction, that is something that you develop in your environment. I don't see the alcoholics, I don't see other kinds of behaviour-based groups all at once demanding special protective rights because of their behaviour. Right now the Los Angeles Unified District has declared June “Gay and Lesbian Pride Month.” Well, this is an abomination. Why? Well, here are impressionable children, with their tax dollars and their parents', being used to force a lifestyle, a value and a belief - not a religion, but like a religion - right down their throats. (Louis Sheldon interviewed by LaVey, LeVay 1996:249)

Sheldon takes a constructionist approach by overwhelmingly blaming the environment for homosexual behaviour. Significantly he claims that all gender identity is environmentally influenced. Therefore heterosexuality is not biological either. He refers to homosexuals as one of several “behaviour based groups”, so for Sheldon only a sexually active gay is relevant. The difference between an alcoholic and a gay that Sheldon fails to recognise, is that an alcoholic will only discover his problem when he starts drinking, yet a homosexual will be aware of his “different” desire before he is sexually active. In fact, an individual can be celibate and homosexual his entire life. While a society that lacks alcohol lacks alcoholics, a society that lacks gay visibility still contains homosexuality - this is because sexuality, unlike drunkenness is innate. Sheldon claims that the Gay Pride message functions like a religion. It is interesting that over the last few decades Fundamentalists have increasingly withdrawn from the influence of modernism into their own social spaces, such as religious schools, television channels, resorts, music and bookstores (see Ammerman (1988): Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World). This is indeed similar to the separate social spaces gays may find themselves in, to a lesser or greater degree. Whether all gays are simply behaviour based is

however a matter of debate, while for Fundamentalists the behavioural model is entirely apt. Many people move through the re-born Christian churches, only to change their outlook and behaviour later - at least forty per cent of children raised by Fundamentalists switch to more liberal denominations by adulthood (Ammerman 1988:184). In other cases the behaviour of Fundamentalists does not reflect their professed beliefs. Homosexuality would also be the only "religion" that is objectively provable. Since the invention of the penile plethysmograph by Kurt Freund in the 1960s, a device measuring "changes in penile volume or pressure that occur in response to erotic stimuli", it has become possible to study arousal directly (LaVey 1996:52). The main problem with Sheldon's views though, are that "rather than finding the fixity of adult sexual orientation a reason to roll back discrimination,...people like Sheldon see it as reinforcing the importance of protecting children from progay influences before it is too late" (LaVey 1996:249).

The above attitude seems to be based on two assumptions. The first assumption once again leads back to older gays as "dirty old men", who need to seduce youngsters into their ranks. The authors of The Pink Agenda attempt not only to prove that homosexuals are more likely to be paedophiles, they also attempt to prove that once gay rights are achieved, paedophiles will be granted similar rights next, in a very forced stepping-stone argument (McCafferty and Hammond 2001:113-125). This attitude prevails, despite sound evidence to the contrary. The *American Psychiatric Association*, for example states that "there is no evidence indicating that homosexuals are more likely than heterosexuals to molest children" (Oberholzer 2001:145). It becomes clear however that some paedophiles have attempted to attach themselves to the gay movements, and wrongly seek acceptance by claiming that homosexuals are like them. Kevin Bishop, a South African representative of the *North American Man-Boy Love Association* (Nambla) claims: "Scratch any homosexual and you will find a paedophile" (McCafferty and Hammond 2001:121). This is not supported by research and shows blatant opportunism by Nambla. On page 124 of The Pink Agenda the authors use a strange deductive argument that states that homosexuality is clearly condemned in the Bible, but paedophilia is not mentioned. If society will allow homosexuality, which is specifically named, then it is even more likely to allow paedophilia. Ironically this demonstrates that society cannot rely on Biblical interpretations to govern itself. It is also ironic that gays are associated with paedophiles when incestuous child-brides seem acceptable in the American Bible-belt, the spiritual homeland of Fundamentalist sects.

Jerry Lee Lewis, the rock 'n' roll musician and cousin of scandalised evangelist Jimmy Swaggert, married his cousin of thirteen in 1958 (Clifford 1992:101). Perhaps this attitude stems from heterosexual anxieties concerning attractions between fathers and daughters, that are displaced onto the homosexual Other. Interestingly Genesis 19, in which Lot's daughters have intercourse with their drunken father, does not "incur the wrath of the Lord", and it is a passage usually avoided by Fundamentalists (Spencer 1995:62). It is even more ironic that paedophiles may even be protected in Fundamentalist churches. In 1993 your author was attending a large Fundamentalist Charismatic congregation in Parow (*The Lighthouse Christian Centre*). A young man who was working for the Church was called onto the stage one Sunday morning. The Pastor explained that a repetitive sinner involved in Church operations should first be warned in private, then before three witnesses, and, if the sinful behaviour persists, before the entire congregation. This is the New Testament form of Church discipline generally applied by Fundamentalists (based on Matthew 18:15-18). The young man was named, and his sin was proclaimed as that of "sodomy". More specifically, his crime was repeatedly raping young boys within the Church. After much hysterical praying the sermon continued. Not one of the hundreds of worshippers alerted the authorities. About a month later, the paedophile testified with a smile, that he was "much better". It is quite clear that these sects are a law unto themselves, and that they do not differentiate between adult "sodomy" and paedophilia, because the Bible fails to mention the latter.

Constructionists may have unwittingly supported the view of gays as interested in boys, by concentrating on pederast relationships in the classical and medieval periods. Rictor Norton points-out that the prevalence of such unions has been severely exaggerated, and the vast accounts of relationships between adults omitted, in an attempt to show that historical homosexuality differed from "modern" homosexuality (Norton 1997:87-89). The second assumption that Fundamentalist homophobia is based on, is that youngsters go through a (natural) phase of same sex experimentation. The often unspoken but implied "wisdom" dictates that during their early teens, boys are regarded as being especially vulnerable to having their sexual preferences influenced by confrontation with gay visibility. This implies that heterosexuality somehow varies in strength during various stages of life. It is also the reason why gay teenagers who come out are often told that they are "just going through a phase". As such "normal heterosexuality" is a construction, by the

homophobic argumentation of the Fundamentalists themselves. Becoming a “healthy heterosexual” is actually becoming a heterosexual with bisexual phases, and potential homoerotic interests. These urges are acceptable as long as they remain latent, but are constantly threatening to erupt. This is a view that goes beyond religion, and teenage homosexual experimentation is regarded as a natural phase by society at large, which judging by how letters dealing with this phenomenon are answered in “agony aunt” magazine sections, regards them as harmless, opportunistic and temporary.

It is not clear whether the assumption of homosexual phases on which Fundamentalists and other homophobes base their assumptions are true, but it demonstrates how homophobic groups can fall into ironic double-speech when the “hetero-as-essentialist/homosexual-as-construction” argument is examined more closely. Scientific evidence generally suggests that gays know before adolescence that they are “different”, and that adult homosexuality is often preceded by childhood gender non-conformity, although the causal chain is as yet unclear (LeVay 1996:106). It is however obvious that youngsters who grow up outside urban areas, or in environments where gay visibility is repressed often know they are gay; some even feel “they are the only one” into adulthood. The following is one example of many, which testifies to the isolation experienced by gays in the small towns and farming communities of South Africa’s “platteland”, especially during the repressive pre-1994 period:

“English people are more open-minded than Afrikaners,” said Rolf. Afrikaans people don’t even know what gay people are. I grew up on a farm. I never knew there was such a thing as gay people. I knew there was something wrong with me. But I didn’t know what. When I was in matric (high school), I was with my parents on a trip to Cape Town. In the Cango Caves, a married man got hold of me. That is when I found out what’s what!” (Miller 1992:34).

The informant’s lover Andries realised even later that he was gay:

For Andries, as for many other white gay men in South Africa, the army was the place in which he came out. He noted, “Your parent’s say, ‘You must go to the army. When you’re finished, you’ll

be a real man.' My God, when you're finished, you'll be a real queen, I promise you that!"...Because of his flamboyant appearance, he was eventually sent to a psychologist and then to a military hospital in Pretoria... "At this stage in my life I didn't know any other gay people," he said. "I just knew I was different." (Miller 1992:35)

The experiences of Rolf and Andries are not uncommon. Both knew they were "different", and only had their first sexual encounters after puberty, during early adulthood. This totally destroys the "seduction" argument, and supports the essentialist viewpoint, that gays are innately different from heterosexuals, at least from a young age. Fundamentalists can therefore rest assured that masses of youngsters will not become gay through queer visibility. They should however come to terms with the fact that a gay minority will always exist, and that they should also attempt to listen to the experiences and needs of homosexuals. They will then understand the horrific effects of their "ex-gay" ministries, and will come to realise that gays do not demand special rights; but equal rights. It is after all the Christian Fundamentalists who are demanding special minority rights that impose on the lives of others, by agitating for an exclusively Christian education, corporal punishment in public schools, anti-abortion legislation and censorship.

Even if homosexuality is regarded as a demonic possession, as more openly extreme Fundamentalists propose, it still leaves a chicken and egg scenario: what came first - the sinful act or attraction, or the demon that causes it? The demonic possession beliefs are carefully omitted from The Pink Agenda, and the book tries to present itself as scientific fact, aimed at "law-makers" (Knight cited in McCafferty and Hammond 2001:vii). This is somewhat misleading though, since gay people are invariably "exorcised" when they fall into the clutches of reborn Christians. Yet those church counsellors who specialise in "gay struggles" know this is not enough. Even an "ex-gay" Fundamentalist like Andrew Comiskey, although stressing "spiritual bondage", rejects the view that the "gay demon" can simply be exorcised. Instead, the reader of his book Pursuing Sexual Wholeness: How Jesus heals the homosexual is likely to discover that the individuals in his healing group simply gradually adopt the surface trappings of ideal heterosexuality, like marriage, while engaging in a constant, possibly life-long struggle against their homosexual desires. This is the basic message, when one looks past the flowery, evangelical "love bombing" language, and the poetic description

of “healthy”, “wholesome” heterosexuality. An example of this is Comiskey’s description of Karen (a character that may be based on a real person or that may be pure invention), who is a potential “ex-lesbian” that reaches her moment of healing, or enlightenment, by observing the goodness of heterosexuality when invited to dinner by a Christian couple:

One evening while eating dinner with them, Karen received an unexpected healing. She observed the husband helping the wife bring out the food and serve the kids. In that brief moment Karen got a profound glimpse of the goodness of heterosexuality. God used the family to mediate His order and intention. He ministered His image to Karen’s heart, and she was changed. No longer could she honestly retreat into the safety of lesbianism. Having received that picture of heterosexual wholeness, she resolved more than ever to realise that image in her own life...He uses healthy relationships to reveal who strugglers really are. By His healing presence mediated through relationships, God reorders His fallen, needy creation. (Comiskey 1989:182)

Through this episode Comiskey seems to be commenting on feminist critiques of the gender inequality present in heterosexual relationships, a topic that would have been especially relevant in 1973, during the period of radical feminism and the sexual revolution, when the original edition of the book was published. He implies that in a true Christian marriage, the man can live out his leadership role as instructed by the Pauline Doctrine, while still showing a loving attitude to his wife by performing a task associated with the feminine. This should demonstrate that heterosexual marriages are not necessarily rigidly unequal. It should signify that there is nothing wrong with progress, and that even Christians do not have to be as conservative as the 1950s generation, when gender roles were even more rigid - as long as this progress remains confined to symbolic surface interactions. In return for her submission to God and her husband, the heterosexual woman gains a patronising helping hand, which Karen finds highly enviable. Had the guest been a gay man, the implied message might have been lost. A gay man who might be used to performing women’s tasks, might see his femininity reinforced by observing an exemplary straight man performing household chores. Perhaps a gay man would have been more “impressed” if he saw the wife helping her husband to fix the car,

but perhaps this would have been too radical for Comiskey, and too unsentimental. The passage reinforces gender stereotypes although the husband “lowers” himself to feminine tasks. Remarkable as this may be to Karen, it strikes the reader as ridiculously trivial. The husband is not described as cooking, washing the dishes or vacuuming. Comiskey cannot take the example too far, firstly because he is preaching largely to the converted who want their own stereotype of wholesomeness represented as a model, and because a weak father might turn the children gay, according to Comiskey’s paradigm.

The book as a whole paints a rosy picture of heterosexuality, while gay relationships are unhappy and short-lived. Gay relationships are described “warts and all”, the problems of heterosexuality, such as divorce, abuse and adultery are hardly mentioned. One wonders what Karen’s reaction will be when confronted by a less ideal heterosexual setting. Before this episode Karen “fell with a woman to whom she was ministering” (Comiskey 1989:190). One also wonders whether the healing was as permanent as Comiskey hopes. In a statement that contradicts Comiskey’s previous discussions on the parental causes of homosexuality he states that “our sexuality is basic to our humanity, which continues to bear the marks of this fallen age” (Comiskey 1989:188). Interestingly there is no mention at all of any change in sexual desire for women in Karen’s “healing moment”. What she desires is the “safety” of a nuclear family, and she has the false idea that this is not possible in a lesbian relationship. Sexual attraction might never change, by Comiskey’s own admission as “healing” is a “dynamic process of becoming whole, a process that will never end until we see Jesus in heaven” (Comiskey 1989:188). Comiskey himself is subject to moments of intense gay desire, despite having married and founded a family. Although he triumphantly overcomes these moments of frustration with ecstatic religious euphoria, these passages hardly paint a picture of a “healed” individual. The following is an interesting example:

While giving a series of lectures on sexual redemption one time, I felt consumed with a longing for distinctly masculine love and affirmation. I ached for it. I felt frustrated that my male friendships could not wholly meet that need, and more frustrating still were the broken patterns I could still observe in my relationships with them. I felt tempted to entertain lustful masculine images. And I resented God for all of it - the neediness that remained in me, the strains of neurotic dependency,

the temptations. Most of all, I resented His intangibility in the midst of my struggle. (Comiskey 1989:190)

Despite confusions in Comiskey's text, such as his inability to choose a clear essentialist or constructionist position, his promises of healing that contrast with his statements of the eternal struggler, and his mixture of frank discussion and loaded religious language, one feels some sincerity in his text. Although his promises of healing, as a complete change of sexual orientation come to nothing, he is a more gentle in his approach than other Fundamentalists. Although he argues (at least in the beginning of his book) that homosexuality is caused by environmental factors, he never claims it is a conscious choice. His statement of an ongoing struggle with homosexuality ironically supports the essentialist argument, and the careful reader eventually realises that a change in sexual orientation is not promised. He also never portrays gays as paedophiles, or bemoans gay visibility unlike the *His People* or *Pink Agenda* Fundamentalists. This is because he already was (or possibly still is) a confessed homosexual who is open about his "struggle". Although one pities the gay individual who takes the title literally and thinks that Jesus will make them straight, Comiskey lacks the homophobia caused by *reaction formation*. This makes his book particularly interesting, as it clashes with other Fundamentalist material in its lack of what is essentially hate speech. The overall discourse is still misleading though, as it equates something as permanent and all-embracing as sexual orientation with overcoming something as harmful as drug addiction - the "ex-gay" is placed in the same discourse as the eternally tempted, but victorious alcoholic, and the "healing group" seems suspiciously similar to *Alcoholics Anonymous*. This is a particularly bad mix of separate issues, as it reminds one of the torturous "scientific" healing attempts in the name of compassion. The testimony of an "ex-gay" in *The Pink Agenda's* appendix features a speaker who developed "murderous" thoughts. The irony is that he only developed these thoughts after he came into close contact with Christians. Henry from Cape Town describes a "former" gay life of a good salary, socialising, promiscuity, and the expected relationship troubles, which was all a bit "shallow". In 1997, Henry came into contact with Christian family members. This is where the narrative becomes pathological:

I knew that according to scripture homosexuality is wrong, so I tried not to think about the Biblical passages that clearly condemned it. I would also justify it in my mind with every possible argument I could find. But at the same time I was worried about myself. I was starting to have violent and murderous thoughts. I decided I needed to see a psychiatrist. (McCafferty and Hammond 2001:193-195)

In both gay folk wisdom and in psychology, it is generally accepted that those who are most fervently homophobic often “struggle” with homosexuality themselves. Some of these individuals may be gay but refuse to acknowledge this, while others may be heterosexual with some homoerotic tendencies that frighten them. It seems that gay studies may also reveal some of the insecurities and identities of heterosexuals. The religious Fundamentalist debate with the gay community brings the essentialist/constructionist debate out of the academy into popular mediums, and it is a pity that few gay spokes-people are aware of it, as it could expose flaws in homophobic argumentation. Until now the gay defence against Fundamentalists consists largely of deconstructing homophobic interpretations of specific Bible verses, their mistaken translations and culturally specific limitations (see Anthonissen and Oberholzer 2001:121-140, Chapter 4: “*Die Bybel en Homoseksualiteit*”). Although this is both necessary and effective, the assumptions Fundamentalists make go beyond the Bible, and their obsession with specific “sins” and verses shows a deeper anxiety about homosexuality. Religion is possibly the greatest cause for homophobia, and the greatest excuse for homophobes to attack gays in a socially acceptable manner; under the guise of love and concern.

Historically this is also true, although the methods employed by both Catholics and Protestants; first in Europe and later in the colonies, were far more atrocious than today. Mutilation, torture, and death by hanging or burning are described throughout Spencer’s *Homosexuality: A History* as the usual sentences for gays in Christian states (Spencer 1995, see especially pages 176-177). Rictor Norton argues against those social constructionists who blame homophobia on the emergence of capitalism and the productive family unit in the 1800s (Norton 1997:92). According to this theory “a homosexual is conceptualised as a non-procreative individual and that is deemed to be sufficient to explain capitalism’s rejection of him, as he does not increase the market” (Norton 1997:93). However, “that does not explain why capitalism fails to reject

with similar virulence nuns and spinsters”, and Norton notes that “real homosexuals spend more money on fashions and furnishings and decorations than heterosexuals, and this seems to have been true in the past when sumptuary laws were passed to prevent fops spending so much money on clothes” (Norton 1997:93). Instead of capitalism, religion is pointed-out as the culprit for homophobia, as gay subcultures have existed before the Industrial Revolution, as for example in sixteenth century Venice (Norton 1997:91). The Marxist constructionists are therefore mistaken in claiming that the homosexual was invented because of capitalism’s replacement of feudalism. Norton writes:

Even if Capitalism rejects homosexuals as being non-productive, it is not clear why it would create the concept of homosexual. If we want one word to explain homophobia, it is not capitalism, it is religious purism. It is beyond doubt that canon law is the direct source of medieval/Renaissance secular statutes regulating “sodomy”, using Christian phraseology that underwent few changes for six centuries. Virtually all specific pogroms against homosexuals can be traced to the initiative of a fundamentalist Christian (or Islamic) group or person: moral reform is motivated by religion, not by economics. (Norton 1997:93)

### **Chapter Three: The Historical Ancestors of the Essentialist/Constructionist debate: Ulrichs, Hirschfeld and Freud.**

The essentialist/constructionist debate has its historical predecessors in influential individuals who held divergent viewpoints on homosexuality, such as Ulrichs, Hirschfeld and Freud. In these examples it becomes apparent that the positions espoused by such figures, are strongly influenced by personal orientation and experience, rather than by notions of objective science. Strictly speaking the testimony of the majority of gays that they were “born that way” cannot be taken entirely serious, as “no one even remembers being born, let alone being born gay” (LeVay 1996:6). By this assertion a gay man “generally means that he felt different from other boys at the earliest age he can remember” (LeVay 1996:6). These differences involved sexual feelings, “but more commonly it involved some kind of gender-nonconformist or sex-atypical traits - disliking rough-and-tumble play - that were not explicitly sexual” (LeVay 1996:6). Although this suggests that “sexual orientation is influenced by factors operating very early in life, these factors could still consist of environmental forces such as parental treatment in the early postnatal period” (LeVay 1996:6). Clear proof is lacking from the debate, although this may change as genetic research becomes more advanced. So far these issues are open to interpretation by both sides of the divide, although each should remember that their proof is not absolute.

The essentialist view was espoused by the “German physician and gay-rights pioneer Magnus Hirschfeld” (1868-1935) (LeVay 1996:7). Although “Hirschfeld was only one of several influential sexologists of his period who paid special attention to the nature and causes of homosexuality”, he “is particularly interesting because he took a more uncompromisingly biological view of homosexuality than other, perhaps better-known researchers such as his predecessor Richard Krafft-Ebbing or his English contemporary Havelock Ellis” (LeVay 1996:7). Hirschfeld’s “biological view, encapsulated in his notion of a ‘third sex’, was the explicit basis for the gay-rights movement that Hirschfeld founded and led for thirty years” (LeVay 1996:7).

Colin Spencer writes that Hirschfeld “happened to be both a homosexual and a transvestite (he coined the latter term), and compiled a vast amount of information on homosexuality, including 20, 000 volumes and 35, 000 pictures to assist his research” (Spencer 1995:325). He was disliked in his native Germany, which

was growing increasingly fascist, and was accused of treachery, as he was a Jew who had given evidence in the Eulenberg trials (Spencer 1995:325). Spencer summarises some of the achievements of Hirschfeld, and the persecution of his work by the Nazis:

In 1897 he founded the Scientific-humanitarian Committee in Berlin, with the aim of abolishing paragraph 175, as well as to educate the public and to interest homosexuals themselves in fighting for their rights...Hirschfeld devised a psychological questionnaire containing 130 questions which was sent out to 10, 000 men and women. He established a marriage counselling service, gave advice on contraception, as well as writing books and monographs upon the subject. He was also concerned with social welfare, alcoholism and prostitution. He claimed that homosexuals had special virtues, being more democratic and altruistic - a claim that particularly annoyed his opponents. He considered homosexuality to be innate, influenced by internal secretions of the glands, a theory that has found few admirers until very recently. Unfortunately his research material was destroyed when Hitler came to power. Nazi hoodlums broke into his Berlin Institute for Sexual Science (which he founded in 1919), burned the records and destroyed the building. Hirschfeld was luckily abroad at the time. (Spencer 1995:326)

Hirschfeld's biological view was preceded by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825-1895), "one of the first pioneers to plead for justice and humanity for same-sex lovers" (Spencer 1995:290). Before the invention and popularisation of Chaddock's term "homosexual", Ulrichs coined the term "urning" (Spencer 1995:291), meaning "follower or descendant of Uranus" (LeVay 1996:12). LeVay further explains the terminology:

The name is a reference to a passage in Plato's Symposium, in which Pausanias calls same-sex love the offspring of the "heavenly Aphrodite", daughter of Uranus. Ulrichs later added the feminine form "urningen" to define women we now refer to as Lesbians. Heterosexuals in Ulrichs's parlance, became "dionings" - descendants of the common Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus by the mortal Dione. (LeVay 1996:12)

Ulrichs “argued that so-called ‘abnormal’ instincts were inborn and therefore natural; that in early foetal development all embryos were the same, after which they divided into three, male, female and urning, the last group having the physical characteristics of one gender but with the sexual instincts which did not correspond to their sexual organs” (Spencer 1995:291). Therefore in foetuses destined to become urnings, “the sex of bodily development was male, while the sex of mental development was female” (LeVay 1996:13). As these individuals were neither totally male nor totally female, they constituted a “third sex” (LeVay 1996:13). Ulrichs was less interested in “why particular individuals had sexually discordant developments between mind and body and therefore did not offer an ultimate explanation for why particular individuals are gay or straight (LeVay 1996:13). Instead, “a humane understanding for the third sex” (Spencer 1995:291) was Ulrichs’s focus:

As long as homosexuality was inborn, Ulrichs felt he could justly claim that homosexual behaviour was natural for homosexual people, and therefore should not be criminalised or viewed as sinful. In essence, Ulrichs was saying that Saint Paul made a mistake in calling same-sex behaviour “against nature” - it would only be against nature for some-one who was innately heterosexual. (LeVay 1996:13)

Later Ulrichs revised his theories to include a “spectrum of urning natures” (LeVay 1996:14). The *weibling* was a male feminine in personality and appearance, who was attracted to masculine men, while the *mannling* “was conventionally masculine”, and attracted to androgynous youths (LeVay 1996:140). Any number of intermediate stages could be present between these extremes, with variations of sexual behaviour between “active” men, who preferred to penetrate their partner, and “passive” men, who assumed the receptive female role (LeVay 1996:150). This has become somewhat of a stereotype, and excludes men who enjoy both roles, or non-penetrative acts, such as mutual masturbation. LeVay points-out that:

The revised conception was far more in accord with our current ideas about the variety of gay men and their sexual relationships. The only major missing element was the possibility of relationships between conventionally masculine men that are at the centre of the self-image projected by the gay male community today. (LeVay 1996:15)

Both Ulrichs and Hirschfeld “accounted for diversity in sexual orientation in terms of the bisexual nature of the foetus, but in keeping with his training as a physician”, Hirschfeld “spoke of the ‘brain’ where Ulrichs had spoken of the mind” (LeVay 1996:19). Hirschfeld was also passionately opposed to the criminalisation of homosexuality, recognising that gay acts resulted from gay desire. LeVay explains this further:

Like Ulrichs, Hirschfeld argued that the prenatal origin of homosexual attraction removed homosexuality from the categories of sin and crime. Of course, he recognised that the law punished behaviour, not feelings. But Hirschfeld also “biologised” the connection between feelings and action by positing an innate sexual drive, whose strength varied between individuals, and which determined whether homosexual feelings were capable of repression. (LeVay 1996:20)

Although he regarded homosexuality as innate, this does not mean that Hirschfeld always regarded it as positive. He never completely abandoned the idea of homosexuality as “degeneracy (Entartung)”, and “suggested more than once, for example, that homosexuality might be a device invented by Nature to prevent people from having degenerate offspring, and he used this idea as an argument against gay people marrying” (LeVay 1996:19). He also believed that bisexual same sex desire could be constrained, and that young people should not be kept in single-sex environments to avoid the nurturing of homosexual feelings (LeVay 1996:20). Thereby same sex desires “would only develop in exclusive homosexual individuals, in whom the strength of the same-sex drive lay beyond what could be modified by experience” (LeVay 1996:20). His *Sappho and Socrates* (1896) phase revealed ambivalent attitudes, with the mention of notable gay historical figures who demonstrated the valuable influence of gays on society, and comparisons between homosexuality and congenital deformities like hare-lip (LeVay 1996:21). The difference between the

conditions was that the latter condition was “correctable, whereas homosexuality in the full urning was not” (LeVay 1996:21). LeVay convincingly argues that Hirschfeld suffered from internalised homophobia, which is not surprising considering the homophobic attitudes of society at the time. This issue and its relevance for American gay movements in the 1950s and 1960s is expanded on by LeVay:

Hirschfeld failed to explain emphatically that the “problem” lay with the homophobic attitude of society, not with homosexuality itself. He had, as we would say nowadays, “internalised” some of the homophobia. But exactly the same phenomenon was apparent in the early days of the gay-rights organisation, Harry Hay’s Mattachine Society, conceded that gay people suffered from physiological handicaps - a rephrasing of Hirschfeld’s “curse of nature” - and the first lesbian organisation, the Daughters of Bilitis, invited speakers to discuss possible cures. Only Ulrichs had been immune to self-loathing: extraordinary man he was, he simply hurled back with redoubled force every rock that society cast his way. (LeVay 1996:21)

Unlike Ulrichs, Hirschfeld did not “attempt to link homosexuality with a broader gender non-conformity” (LeVay 1996:21). LeVay points-out that this may be due to Hirschfeld’s nature, which was formed by a conventional childhood (he had a good relationship with his father) (LeVay 1996:21). While Ulrichs was attracted to soldiers and *Burschen* (strapping lads), Hirschfeld preferred feminine men (LeVay 1996:21). He was silent on his own sex life, and never formally came out, “although his homosexuality eventually became known to a wide circle of colleagues and acquaintances” (LeVay 1996:21). Unfortunately Hirschfeld was often not recognised for his valuable contributions, as psychodynamic mental sciences replaced biological explanations of mental diversity after the Second World War (LeVay 1996:38). The memories of Nazi eugenics were strongest in Germany, and Hirschfeld’s theories were blamed for inspiring the extermination of gays, by claiming that what the Nazis considered as a deformity was innate (LeVay 1996:38). LeVay points-out that this view misrepresents the Nazi stance on homosexuality:

In fact, however the Nazis did not generally consider homosexuality to be innate or a sign of degeneracy. Rather, they considered homosexuality to be the moral equivalent of an infectious disease that, by means of seduction, could spread all too easily through the ranks of Germany's finest youth. That Hitler himself espoused this theory is made clear in a memorandum issued by his headquarters on August 19, 1941, which read in part: "...More often than not, a homosexual seduces a huge number of boys, so that homosexuality is actually as infectious and as dangerous as the plague". (LeVay and a shortened quotation by Hitler in LeVay 1996:38)

Interestingly the Nazi view is analogous to that held by the Fundamentalist Christians, and the two differ only in the extremity of the "solution" to the gay "problem". Although the influence of Hirschfeld on the early gay American movements has often been downplayed, his influence on Henry Gerber's Chicago based *Society for Human rights* (formed in 1924) has been documented (LeVay 1996:39). Most significantly "it seems likely that Hirschfeld, like Ulrichs, based his earliest ideas about homosexuality primarily on his own experience and modified these ideas later when he came to know larger numbers of homosexual men and women" (LeVay 1996:21).

Sigmund Freud's attitude to homosexuality is described as confusing and obscure, possibly influenced by personal homoerotic attractions (Spencer 1995:319). Although he was not homophobic, he did seem to regard homosexuality as a pathological disorder, and he could be termed constructionist in his outlook. Although Freud was interested in "constitutional factors" in psychic development in his early career, in his *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905) "he declared that 'perversions' and neuroses were merely alternative ways of dealing with unresolved Oedipal conflicts: by arrest of development in the one case, or by redirection of the sexual drive in the other" (LeVay 1996:33). Freud described the process whereby male children are led to homosexuality in a letter to Carl Jung, which is summed up by LeVay:

"In their earliest childhood, later forgotten," they had "an intense erotic attachment to a female person, as a rule their mother, provoked and fostered by the excessive tenderness of the mother herself, further buttressed by the recessiveness of the father in the child's life." At a later stage "the

boy represses his love for his mother by putting himself in her place, identifies himself with her, and takes his own person as a model in whose likeness he chooses his new love objects. Thus he has become homosexual; in fact he had slid back into autoeroticism, since the boys whom the growing youngster now loves are, after all, only substitute persons and renewals of his own childish person, boys whom he loves as his mother had loved him as a child. (Freud quoted in LeVay 1996:33)

Some of Freud's contributions to the issue were beneficial, such as his dismissal of "such notions as masturbation being harmful or leading to later homosexuality", or by his returning of sexuality to the child, which had been robbed by Victorian ideas of innocence and purity (Spencer 1995:319). Aware of anti-Semitic uses of the degeneracy theory, he never agreed to labelling "homosexuality as a sign of hereditary degeneration" (Spencer 1995:319). In an argumentation similar to contemporary constructionists, Freud accepted that homosexuality was a natural phase or sexual attraction for everyone, that became exaggerated in "full" homosexuals. Spencer writes:

...he concluded that homosexuality was a developmental disorder - this meant that it was in everyone's psychological history, never fully eradicated from the heterosexual adult. His theory made heterosexuality a product of family interaction as much as homosexuality. (Spencer 1995:320)

In a letter to an American mother of a gay son he is positive towards homosexuals, and states that it is not an illness, but a "variation of the sexual development" (Spencer 1995:320). He lists famous homosexuals and calls their persecution an injustice. (Spencer 1995:320). This letter (written in 1935) contrasts with Freud's earlier work which presents homosexuality as an illness, with terms like "anal fixation" and "penis envy", and "many psychotherapists, influenced by Freud's work and theories, have attempted to 'cure' it" (Spencer 1995:320). Spencer points-out that "there is something highly confused within Freud himself on the matter" - while he did not describe homosexuality as an illness, he did refer to it as a "perversion", a loaded term that

could have been replaced by a neutral word, like “different” (Spencer 1995:320). Spencer argues that the ambivalent attitude may stem from Freud’s own repressed homosexual desires:

The confusion lies in the fact that Freud never quite adjusted to his own homosexuality. In the 1890s he had felt an ardent intimacy with William Fleiss, an ear, nose and throat specialist from Berlin. Fleiss had written to Freud with admiration and from then on Freud used Fleiss as a confidant, discussing all the problems which beset him. Later, Freud agreed that his attachment to Fleiss had contained a homosexual element. Then there was Sandor Ferenczi, a psychoanalyst from Budapest, who made exorbitant demands on Freud for intimacy and love. Freud complained about him: “a very dear fellow, and but a little awkwardly dreamy and infantile towards me ... he has let everything be done to him like a woman and my homosexuality, after all, does not go far enough to accept him as one. (Spencer 1995:320-321)

It seems that Freud, like Ulrichs and Hirschfeld, was influenced by his personal attractions when writing about homosexuality. Because he recognised something homosexual within himself, he could not label it an illness. Instead he felt that every one shared his degree of gay desire, and that exclusive homosexuals became so because of a developmental disorder. His followers however could not draw this message from his texts, and many post-Freudian analysts in the 1940s and 1950s regarded homosexuality as pathological and as a “sign of a disturbed personality”, that needed to be readjusted to heterosexuality (Spencer 1995:321). LeVay writes that when Hirschfeld left the *Psychoanalytical Society* in 1911, this triggered an insulting outburst against him by Freud, and the “divergence between the two men epitomised the subsequent history of twentieth-century psychology, with its deep divisions between psychodynamic and biological theories of the mind” (LeVay 1995:34). It also formed the basic premises for the essentialist/constructionist debate. What becomes apparent is that any notion of homosexual innateness was disregarded until recently, although it was gay essentialists like Hirschfeld and Ulrichs that made tremendous sacrifices to champion gay rights, and formed the fore-runners of contemporary gay movements, that have secured many personal and civil rights for gay and lesbian people. It seems that constructionism is often used by anti-gay forces, although the

original writers (like Freud) may not have intended this. It therefore seems ironic that Freud signed a statement in 1930 that stated that “to punish homosexuality was an ‘extreme violation of human rights’” (Spencer 1995:322).

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#### **Chapter Four: Issues in Gay History and Anthropology.**

Both the studies of history and anthropology look to cultures outside Western modernity, and therefore make important contributions to the essentialist versus the social constructionist debate. They may even point gay studies beyond the confines of this debate, as they involve gendered and ethnic identities that are relevant to post-colonial studies and the politics of queer theory. Both historians, in texts and possibly archaeological artefacts, and anthropologists in fieldwork among living cultures of their time, have found evidence of same sex behaviour in various societies. It is the meaning of gay behaviour and its interpretation that is disputed by theorists, rather than the proof that such behaviour existed. Vernon A. Rosario writes in his essay "*Homosexual Bio-Histories: Genetic Nostalgias and the quest for Paternity*":

It should be noted that both essentialists and constructivists generally agree that there has been male-male and female-female erotic and sexual activity documented throughout the historical record as in most cultures. But neither camp is interested merely in any same-sex sexual activity (for example, the "situational" homosexuality of prisoners or sailors restricted to a single-sex environment). It is the more elusive issue of same-sex desire or sexual orientation ("true" homosexuality or gayness) that is the matter of concern. (Rosario 1997:7)

Although the constructionists and essentialists overlap on this focus, it is problematised by the relationship between sex and identity:

Constructivists, taking their cue from Foucault (1976), insist that there is a major conceptual leap between thinking of sex in terms of sexual (particularly genital) acts, and theorising sexuality as a deeply ingrained feature of a subject's feelings, self definition, and social functioning. (Rosario 1997:7)

The fact that evidence of gay behaviour has often been censored, destroyed or ignored, especially before the 1970s, has certainly limited the material proofs of academic arguments. Several tribal and ethnic cultures have been destroyed or altered, especially the aspects of them that the missionaries found repugnant. In initial encounters of conquest indigenous texts, religions, and gay or transgendered people were destroyed first. This is well illustrated in the Spanish conquest of Latin America. Spencer writes of the Mayan experience:

The Spaniards were shocked and horrified at the homosexuality they found. Once in power they began to burn the sodomites. When Balboa came to Panama, he killed forty transvestites by feeding them to his dogs. (Spencer 1995:143)

It should be remembered that many European countries enforced (to a lesser or greater degree) homophobia by law until the last three decades of the twenty-first century. In the 1950s American McCarthyism regarded gays as a "security risk" (Spencer 1996:356). In Britain "healing" therapies were regarded as a compassionate solution to homosexuality. Even prodigies like Alan M. Turing (1912-1954) - who "paved the way for the modern computer" and shortened the war by cracking Germany's Enigma Code - was forced to choose between prison and "organo-therapy", that caused him to grow breasts, and induced a chemical depression which resulted in his suicide. All of this occurred because he reported a case of theft against a former lover to the police (Alyson 1991:106-107). It is therefore not surprising that in the academies homosexuality was largely avoided as well. Some strides were however made, as feminism, birth-control and the sexual revolution loomed. In 1960, Michelangelo Buonarroti's (1475-1564) poems were restored and published in their original homoerotic form, after the altered versions addressed to women had been accepted for centuries (Alyson 1991:101-102). In sociological studies the publication of Kinsey's (now disputed) Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male (1948) scandalised orthodox sexual values by the high incidence figures for homosexual behaviour (Spencer 1996:355). "Homosexuals world-wide gained encouragement" from statements like:

Persons with homosexual histories are to be found in every age group, in every social level, in every conceivable occupation, in cities, on farms, and in the most remote areas of the country. (Kinsey (1948) quoted in Spencer 1996:355)

Ford and Beach undertook a sex-survey of the world's cultures in 1951, which suggested that "repression of homosexuality was thus much less general than had been assumed from a Western perspective" (Hekma 2000:83).

As Western countries headed for legal reform, and homosexuals gained some public sympathy, the newly liberated colonies retained the homophobic attitudes of their previous rulers. Countries like China ignored the remaining evidence of homosexuality in their ancient culture, or reports of Jesuit missionaries from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries describing the Chinese "addiction to the abominable sin" of sodomy (Spencer 1996:386). It is now considered a "foreigner's disease", and Chinese gays are at risk of shock treatment, prompting Australia to accept them as political refugees (Spencer 1996:386). Officially, this attitude seems true of much of Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America (although there are exceptions, notably South Africa). Will Roscoe describes in his 1991 study *The Zuni Man-Woman*, how the tradition of the cross-dressing berdache was removed from Zuni culture, by ridiculing cross-dressed children in boarding schools. Some Native American societies have only recently re-discovered the berdache tradition.

In the Western academies, the disputes on the relationships between sexual behaviour and identity are thus limited by scant research material. Broadly stated, the constructionists argue that although there was homosexual behaviour in other societies; there were no homosexuals. The supposed lack of words in societies for the homosexual as a separate type of persons, is one "proof" that the role of the contemporary homosexual only developed in recent modernity (Schuyf 2000:65). The exclusively homosexual identity became constructed due to social forces, or the increased medicalisation and classification of sexualities. Influenced by feminism (Epstein 1990:243), this view rose to academic prominence in the late 1970s, and is well represented in Kenneth Plummer's collection of constructionist texts: *The Making of the Modern Homosexual* (1981). In 1996 the essentialist Rictor Norton, wrote back to this idea in *The Myth of the*

Modern Homosexual. The essentialists would argue that far from being greatly different, the experiences of homosexuals in other cultures are recognisably similar. Homosexuality in all cultures falls under the same three models: gender-structured, age-structured and egalitarian forms (Hekma 2000: 85-86). Both constructionist and essentialist approaches will be examined, and Africa will then be focused on to illustrate these issues, especially as gay studies have often omitted this continent.

Although constructionists would agree that “homosexuality” is a concept and a phenomenon that arose relatively recently in Euro-American history to describe a specific type of person and that person’s erotic interests in others of the same sex” (Rosario 1997:7), there seems to be some debate on when the “homosexual” emerged:

The precise dating for the emergence of the first true homosexuals is a matter of debate. Foucault (1976) identifies the earliest homosexuals in the pages of Westphal’s 1869 article on “contrary sexual sensation” Halperin (1990) claims that homosexuality was invented in 1892 with Charles Chaddock’s introduction of the word into the English language. Kimmel (1990) and Trumbach (1989) take the genesis further back to the eighteenth century. Whatever the date of birth, most constructionists would agree that homosexuality *per se* could not be located much earlier than the eighteenth century, and certainly not in the Classical period, Middle Ages or Renaissance as Boswell (1980, 1994), Rouse (1977), and the Encyclopaedia of Homosexuality assume (Rosario 1997:7).

This causes some confusion in the broad constructionist debate, since it creates the impression that the homosexual suddenly appeared in history; yet the exact moment cannot be pin-pointed.

Unlike the essentialists, who regard a person’s sexual orientation as “objective, intrinsic and culture independent”, the constructionist “denies that there are such facts about people’s sexual orientation and would disagree with the exhortation that it is mistaken to look at an individual as being of a particular sexual orientation in the absence of a cultural construction of that orientation” (Stein 1990:4-5). It would therefore

be inappropriate to ask whether historical figures, such as Joan of Arc or Walt Whitman were homosexuals (Stein 1990:4).

The above point forms part of one of the earliest constructionist essays by Mary McIntosh: "*The Homosexual Role*" (1968). It demonstrates the basis of constructionism, and some shortcomings of this theory. Edward Stein points-out that McIntosh uses the labelling theory, a "sociological approach to defend social constructionism as applied to homosexuality" (Stein 1990:5). McIntosh observes that lay people and psychiatrists class people into homosexuals and heterosexuals, and that they regard it as a condition which people either have or not (McIntosh 1990:250). However, "some of them recognise that homosexual feelings and behaviour are not confined to the persons they would like to call "homosexuals" and that some of these do not actually engage in homosexual behaviour" (McIntosh 1990:25). McIntosh argues that "this should pose a crucial problem, they evade the crux by retaining their assumption and puzzling over the question of how to tell whether someone is "really" homosexual or not" (McIntosh 1990:25). A third type of person, the "bisexual" is characterised "to handle the fact that behaviour cannot be conveniently dichotomised" (McIntosh 1990:26). Writers have "referred to an adolescent homosexual phase or have used such terms as "latent homosexual" or "pseudo-homosexual" to "cover the cases where the symptoms of behaviour or of felt attractions do not match the diagnosis" (McIntosh 1990:26). The "conception of homosexuality as a condition' supports behaviour that operates as a form of social control in a society in which homosexuality is condemned" (McIntosh 1990:27). McIntosh describes the two ways in which social labelling acts as a kind of social policeman:

In the first place it helps to provide a clear-cut, publicised and recognisable threshold between permissible and impermissible behaviour. This means that people cannot so easily drift into deviant behaviour. Their first moves in a deviant direction immediately raise the question of a total move in a deviant role with all the sanctions that this is likely to elicit. Second, the labelling serves to segregate the deviants from the others, and this means that their deviant practices and their self-justifications for these practices are contained within a relatively narrow group. The creation of a specialised, despised and punished role of homosexual keeps the bulk of society pure in rather the

same way that the similar treatment of some kinds of criminals helps keep the rest of society law-abiding. (McIntosh 1990:27)

This labelling practise “as a technique of social control” has a disadvantage as people have a tendency to become “fixed in their deviance once they have become labelled” (McIntosh 1990:27). McIntosh compares this process to other forms of deviancy, like drug taking and racial distinctions (McIntosh 1990:28). McIntosh then describes how homosexuals themselves welcome homosexuality as a condition:

For just as rigid categorisation deters people from drifting into deviancy, so it appears to foreclose on the possibility of drifting back into normality and thus removes the element of anxious choice. It appears to justify the deviant behaviour of the homosexual as appropriate for him as a member of the homosexual category. The deviancy can be seen as legitimate for him and he can continue in it without rejecting the norms of the society. (McIntosh 1990:28)

The term “role” of homosexual is not introduced to describe a sexual behaviour pattern, but to challenge the popular beliefs “that sexual behaviour patterns cannot be dichotomised in the way that social roles can” (McIntosh 1990:29).

The argument apparently claims that all people are bisexual, and that people simply adopt gay or straight identities. According to this paradigm the fact that many straight men do not have gay sex is simply because “homosexual” is considered deviant. Homosexuals that do not engage sexually with women do so simply because they do not want to betray their perceived role. This all seems to force sexuality into McIntosh’s sociological paradigm. The fact is that gays do not sleep with women, or straight men with other men, because they are not attracted to them. The bisexual who is attracted equally to both sexes does exist, but there are social forces that influence sexual behaviour beyond labelling. McIntosh refers to the homosexual role as justifying “deviant behaviour”; yet she claimed earlier that some of those called homosexuals “do not actually engage in homosexual behaviour”. This could mean that they are either celibate gays, or bisexuals and heterosexuals in the wrong role, although it is unclear in the last two cases why they should adopt the

punished, deviant homosexual role. In the case of celibacy, the homosexual role is internally experienced, and is not behaviour based. It could well be that gay men are forced into an inappropriate heterosexual role and appear to be bisexual. The Kinsey surveys show that social labelling has not prevented same sex experimentation, but it would be mistaken to view all these men as homosexual. Even McIntosh writes that bisexuality is also medicalised as a condition, but places into parenthesis: "(unless as a passing response to unusual situations such as confinement in a one sex prison)" (McIntosh 1990:26). In other words, some same sex behaviour is a passing response, that does not betray the heterosexual role. Living as a homosexual in a society that favours heterosexuality is an unusual position, and may socially pressure gay men into marriage or other straight sex. McIntosh's arguments do not apply well to gay men who live "invisibly" in the closet. Her comparisons of gays to other deviants are also somewhat inaccurate and forced, since even in 1968's Britain or America gays were slowly gaining some acceptance, and did not all view themselves as deviant. The crux is that for "out" sexually active homosexual men, homosexuality is a repeated pattern because of sexual attraction. For heterosexual men this behaviour should cease, usually after adolescence or a change of environment. Can one regard a heterosexual as bisexual or gay because of youthful homoerotic experience? To use a constructionist analogy of deviance: can one regard Bill Clinton as a drug addict, because he experimented with cannabis in his youth (although he obviously did not inhale)? Although the forces controlling society may indeed use deviant labels to deter people from behaviours they regard as deviant, this simply does not work very effectively, and may even have the opposite effect. It would be especially ineffective if those governing society are themselves viewed as deviant. In the second chapter of this thesis it has already been pointed-out that many gays grow-up unaware of labels like homosexual, yet they know of their "different" attraction. They are not aware of having a condition that dictates that they should be "effeminate by nature", or as adults "be attracted to boys" in order to self-fulfil social expectations (McIntosh 1990:29). These are stereotypes of the homosexual role, that are not approved of by many gays.

Under the next section of her essay titled "*The homosexual role in various societies*" McIntosh attempts to prove her argument by referring to historical and anthropological evidence, that should prove how different non-modern or non-Western homosexuality was from the contemporary identity. Her main point is summarised in her concluding sentence: "In all these societies there may be much homosexual behaviour, but

there are no homosexuals” (McIntosh 1990:33). Yet ironically she writes about feminine-masculine male marriages in the Mojave tribe: “This form shows a marked similarity to our own, though in some ways it is even more extreme” (McIntosh 1990:31). One wonders in what manner this is more extreme, perhaps because the feminine partner is a transvestite, or because same sex marriages were accepted.

McIntosh argues against Marc Daniel’s claim that pope Julian II had a definite non-sexual relationship with Alidosi. Daniel’s argument is that they must have been straight because they had mistresses, were not effeminate, were slandered by gossiping enemies, and had other platonic male friendships. In a seemingly radical step, McIntosh writes that they may indeed have had a sexual relationship:

In other words Daniel is trying to fit an early sixteenth century Pope into the modern conception of the homosexual as effeminate, exclusively homosexual and sexual in relation to men. The fact that he does not fit, is of course no evidence, as Daniel would have it, that his relationship with Alidosi was not a sexual one (McIntosh 1990:30).

If, as McIntosh supposes, the relationship was sexual, one can also find no evidence against them being homosexual. Firstly, regarding all gay men as effeminate is a heterosexual stereotype of gays. Judging by the popular “Beefcake” erotic gay material of the time (see Physique Pictorial, Volume III 1968-1990) femininity was not regarded as ideal in the gay scene in late 1960s and 1970s. Although present in the gay scene, and probably recognisably gay, the effeminate “queen” is a minority. Gregg Blachford discusses how gay men mixed femininity (especially verbally) and butch exterior looks, and notes their ability to switch between exaggerated camp mannerisms and masculine behaviour (Blachford 1981:196,203). In his essay “*Male dominance and the gay world*” he writes:

The “Homosexual role”, discussed by McIntosh earlier, has to be seen as in no way permanent, for the expectations of that role now prohibit or certainly limit effeminacy. (Blachford 1981:188)

There is as little reason to believe that every gay person was effeminate in the sixteenth century, as in McIntosh's period of writing this essay. She seems to be largely ignorant of gay culture. Secondly, mistresses might have been socially expected at the time, and as Popes were not expected to have offspring (although some did) there is no evidence of straight sex. The notion that sex is always performed due to love or attraction is a modern one. Both homosexuals and heterosexuals performed procreative sex as a duty, while practising their true proclivities in private. Thirdly, slander may be hurtful, but often contains grains of truth. The fact that this Pope had no other accusations made about him may support the claim, since untrue slander is usually exaggerated beyond belief. Fourthly, platonic male friends are not unusual for gay men, who are not attracted to every male they meet. Gay men learn that showing any interest in heterosexual men may expose them to direct social or physical danger. Nothing of what McIntosh writes proves that Pope Julian and Alidosi were necessarily bisexual. They may have been, but McIntosh's argument is not convincing. If anything, all the above could show how committed they were to each other. Such a loving relationship is perhaps not often attainable, but recognisable and desirable to modern homosexuals. McIntosh admits that historical "secondary evidence" is unreliable (McIntosh 1990:30). Yet she makes stereotypical assumptions about such evidence; while seeming unaware of homosexual diversity in her own culture.

Anthropologists too can "fall into this trap" of claiming there is no homosexuality in other cultures (McIntosh 1990:30). McIntosh refers to the Middle Eastern model in which the "passive partner demeans himself by his feminine submission", while the active partner is not ridiculed or despised (McIntosh 1990:32). This practise is similar to McIntosh's previous example of the Mojave *Ayla* (bedarche transvestite), marrying a masculine man (McIntosh 1990:31). Yet, in this case it is the feminine male who is not ridiculed, since he could not help his "condition", but the masculine man was teased (McIntosh 1990:32). Both refer to feminine and masculine males, yet the respective cultures respond to them differently. While the Mojave "form shows a marked similarity to our own", McIntosh writes a page further: "this radical distinction between the feminine, passive homosexual and his masculine partner is not made very much in our own society" (McIntosh 1990:32). The other accepted pattern of homosexuality in other societies is a "variegated sexual pattern"(McIntosh 1990:32). McIntosh refers to pederast activities among

the Australian Aranda, classical Greeks and the North African Sivans (McIntosh 1990:33). These practices do vary from acceptable self-definitions of modern homosexuals. Pederasty, or sex between adult men and pre-adolescent boys is not broadly accepted by the modern collective gay movement. This is not because pederastic attractions and practices do not occur in modern society (although they are repulsive to many), but these cases should fall under paedophilia (as they should for heterosexual child-sex). They are often correctly regarded as destructive to the boy and exploitative. It is because many academics have not separated pederasty from homosexuality that McCafferty and Hammond could string together an argument that paints gays as child-molesters in The Pink Agenda (2001:113-124). Whether one can judge such practices in other cultures, is probably as debatable for gay theorists as whether accepting practices like female circumcision, because it endows women with status, is for feminists. In the cultural relativism of postmodernism, judgement, academically speaking is tricky. It seems that both homosexuals and heterosexuals were expected to indulge in behaviours that were functional, but not ideal. The penetration of boys possibly also served as a religious ritual in some cultures, during which the "essence" of manhood was transferred to the boy via the older man's semen (Spencer 1995:18). McIntosh has however not proven that there were no homosexuals in these societies. Individuals behave as society allows, yet that does not mean they would not like alternatives.

Visiting Egypt to observe gay life, Niel Miller noted that most homosexual men had wives:

...was one of those secrets that virtually every Egyptian man was bisexual? I had thought that was a cliché. Now I was beginning to believe that it was a fact, and that sexuality in Egypt really was very different from sexuality in the West. (Miller 1992:91)

The gay couple in question - Ali and Hani - continued their relationship after Hani was married to a Western woman. Yet the reason for the marriage was a scheme to allow for a Western-style egalitarian gay marriage:

Typically, Ali had his schemes. He had suggested that Hani marry an American woman so that both he and Ali could go to the States - with their wives. That way they could continue to be together.

"Is there any place in the world where two men can marry?" Hani wanted to know.

I mentioned Denmark.

"Gays can marry in Denmark!" cried Hani. Let's go there!" (Miller 1992:91)

The above example merely points towards a desired escape from the cultural "confines" of Egypt, since the informers may modify their views when confronted with a Western researcher. One also wonders how the wives would respond to their scheme. It does however show that modern concepts of "gay rights" do appeal to non-Western gays.

On the "*Development of the homosexual Role in England*", McIntosh correctly points-out the difficulties with historical material that is concerned with "great events" rather than with "recurrent patterns" (McIntosh 1992:33). The scholars that have attempted to trace sexuality for seventy years before her study, failed to prove homosexual identity before the seventeenth century.

Their studies of English history before the seventeenth century consist usually of inconclusive speculation as to whether certain men, such as Edward II, Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, were or were not homosexual. Yet the disputes are inconclusive not because of lack of evidence, but because none of these men fits the modern stereotype of the homosexual. (McIntosh 1990:33)

Unfortunately McIntosh does not state what this stereotype entails. It seems to have something to do with feminine males. Yet when such males are mentioned in diverse cultures, their role is seen as radically different to Western culture. If the comparison of past ages is made to a stereotype, then it is compared to an unrealistic image of modern homosexuals.

In the seventeenth century a rudimentary homosexual subculture became evident, "although the descriptions do not coincide exactly with the modern conception" (McIntosh 1990:33). McIntosh concentrates on descriptions of transvestism, and "camp" effeminate men. The terms "Molly, Nancy-boy, Madge Cull" are described as not coinciding with modern terms like "fag, queer, gay, bent" (McIntosh

1990:33). Only a century later did the masculine dominate the homosexual role (McIntosh 1990:35). McIntosh attempts to divide masculine roles from feminine roles by history and cultures, but this results in confusion and contradictions. Both effeminate and masculine men are found simultaneously in the modern homosexual subculture, and in other cultures, according to MacIntosh's examples. Although erotic ideals may vary according to wider cultural trends, there has never been one monolithic role in any given culture, based on the reproduction of heterosexual gender roles.

McIntosh admits that her essay is far from exhaustive (McIntosh 1990:41). Its radical departure from biological determinism, to the study of socially constructed roles, also influenced feminism, as Stevi Jackson writes:

Mary McIntosh argued in one of the founding statements of social constructionism, the homosexual "role" was itself social in origin and of relatively recent historical invention. This new work had caught my imagination, yet what I wanted to understand was not deviance but the normal everyday production of femininity and masculinity (Jackson 1999:8)

McIntosh's main conclusion is that the sociologist should see homosexuals "as a social category rather than a medical and psychiatric one" (McIntosh 1990:41). This is a valuable statement, especially when one considers the harm done to homosexuals by medical attempts at changing sexual orientation. The average "healthy" homosexual does not require psychiatric or medical attention any more than the heterosexual. McIntosh admits that the "specific content" of this role is not dealt with in her essay; but that sociologists can pursue this further. The homosexual does perform the social role that coincides with his desire, and because it is often negatively labelled, this can impact on his behaviour and well-being. McIntosh is also correct in observing that same sex behaviour is not monopolised by persons in a homosexual role. Incidental homosexuality does occur, and the true bisexual does exist. Yet, even McIntosh refers to "recurrent" behaviour as a criterion to identify historical homosexual roles. This should also apply to the modern practising homosexual. Regarding homosexuals as simply trapped in their roles for the security of identity, or heterosexuals trapped in their roles because they fear a gay label, is denying people an inner life of

motivating desires and attractions. Her arguments of the modern role as absent from other cultures is not entirely convincing.

Such differences between cultures as models based on age, or social status and sexuality would also vary between cultures for heterosexuality. Seeking them only in homosexuality, reveals more of heterosexist discourses than the existence of homosexual individuals in broad functional models. It is not argued that because heterosexual models in non-Western cultures include polygamy, arranged marriages or child-brides that these cultures therefore contain no recognisable “modern heterosexuals”. The deconstruction of heterosexuality in Western culture is usually the task undertaken by feminists like Stevi Jackson, who regards it as a social construction, rather than a biologically norm, which places the male into an economic, political and sexual position of power over the female (see Heterosexuality in Question Jackson: 1999). The “weeding out” of heteronormativity in cultural discourses (Stein 1999:11) is also one of the projects of queer theory:

What makes queer theory *queer* is not that it concerns homosexuality or that its practitioners are lesbians or gay men, but that it questions assumptions that are steeped, often subtly, in heterosexist biases. Based on this interpretation, whereas lesbian and gay studies, applied to history, might chronicle the lives of ostensibly lesbian and gay historical figures like Michelangelo, Shakespeare, and Socrates (Garde 1964; Rowse 1977), a queer theory approach to history might eschew our contemporary categories of sexual orientation and look instead at sexual deviance in history. (Stein 1999:11)

Since searching for homosexual behaviours and identities in other cultures relied on models or public markers (transvestism, for example), anthropologists assumed there was no homosexuality when these were absent (Hekma 2000:82). When such markers were discovered, constructionists took these to demonstrate their difference to modern homosexuals. Heterosexuality - because it is assumed to be the biological, inherent norm - has merely been assumed to exist as a cross-cultural phenomenon. This would be unacceptable to queer and feminist approaches that “call into question the inevitability and naturalness of

heterosexuality” and “both take an oppositional relationship to a social and cultural order that enshrines male dominated heterosexuality as a largely unquestioned form” (Jackson 1999:161). An interesting study could be made of how these models reflect heterosexual power-relationships, as the passive male is effeminate, a transvestite, or a boy not fully regarded as masculine. In male-dominated “oriental” culture the passive male is mocked, while in more female-dominated Native American cultures the active male is teased (Sullivan 1996:60). These roles may however not be as rigid as researchers are told. Miller is suspicious about the information given to him on this point in Egypt:

And I was baffled by the ninety-percent “active” -ten per cent passive that he (and others) ascribe to Egyptian men. For that to be true, the ten per cent must have been very busy. (Miller 1992:77)

It would also be relevant to discover how and when these models developed as labels of homosexual roles and how heterosexuality was described at the time, including both the male and female power relationships, concepts of love, sexual behaviour, ownership, domination and so on.

Constructionists like Mary McIntosh argue that people emotionally and sexually attracted to the same sex “may have existed in the past but, because of social pressures, were forced to express their desires and feelings in socially structured and distinct ways; it means that because homosexuals could not understand themselves in this way, homosexuals simply weren’t” (Sullivan 1995:62). The self-understanding on which one’s existence depends, is dictated by the social constructs into which one is born, and on the “social discourses into which one is initiated” (Sullivan 1995:62). As such human nature is a “spontaneous social creation”, and while human beings may exist, “what they mean to each other is entirely contingent on the world they find themselves in” (Sullivan 1995:62-63). Homosexuals in different eras and cultures are “utterly separate identities”, rather than “different variations on the same human theme” according to constructionism. Andrew Sullivan further illustrates this point:

The transgenerational and the transgenderal relationships are completely different than the homosexual relationship, and the people involved are completely different people. Brought together

they would not speak the same language or understand each other's experience. Not only is the past another country, it is peopled with other beings. So, for that matter is the present. (Sullivan 1996:63)

Sullivan names Michel Foucault as the "most significant influence on the liberationist thinkers" (Sullivan 1995:63). By liberationists, Sullivan is referring to the constructionists, whose doctrine is the opposite to that of the prohibitionists (Sullivan 1995:56-57). For both groups homosexuality exists only as same sex acts, rather than as a condition. For the prohibitionists homosexuality is not a full or deep part aspect of human nature, but an act of "vandalism against God's ordered creation" (Sullivan 1995:57). For the liberationists "it is a construction, generated in human consciousness by the powerful to control and define the powerless" (Sullivan 1995:57). The liberationist prescription for human fruition "is to be free of all social constructs, to be liberated from the condition of homosexuality into a fully chosen form of identity, which is a repository of individual acts of freedom" (Sullivan 1995:57). Like all categories used to define and describe human life, for Foucault the "homosexual" label is deeply suspect, as Sullivan explains:

Words are invariably instruments of power, ways in which the strong control the weak, and among the ways in which that control can be temporarily resisted, if never ultimately overcome. For these words are embedded in "discourses," or ways of speaking that only serve to strengthen and reinforce the power relations that exist: discourses of science, of morality, of psychology, of criminology, of sexuality. (Sullivan 1995:63)

Sullivan points-out that these arguments were not entirely new to Foucault, and may have originated with Rousseau, who saw chains to restrain man's "unfettered" nature in the "elaborate trappings of society" (Sullivan 1995:64). Marx regarded "those chains to be linked to historically determinant forces of economic upheaval" (Sullivan 1995:64). While Rousseau through the "general will", and Marx through revolution, saw solutions to escape from these chains; "for Foucault, the sources of repression and control were that much more elusive, decentralised, immanent in the discourses from which it was impossible fully to escape"

(Sullivan 1995:64). Foucault was a sceptic concerning claims of a “sexual revolution in the modern West” (Sullivan 1995:64). The very concept of isolating sex as a condition, as the channelling of a useful social activity, or as significant in exploring new identities, simply replaced old authoritarian chains with new ones (Sullivan 1995:64). Sullivan explains this further, and highlights the importance of the confession to an authority in creating identity:

The dialogue of the psychiatrist’s couch was merely an extension of the priest’s confessional; and even when we thought we were uncovering the truth about sex, we were merely affirming the existence of an authority who had the right to know that truth; the attempt to liberate sex, to talk incessantly about it, to reveal its secrets, was merely a further trap in a language that subjected human beings to the power that others wielded. The history of sexuality in the West is not a history from repression to liberation, but the exchange of one kind of power relations to another. (Sullivan 1995:64)

Edward Stein writes that “the noted French philosopher” Michel Foucault published his first volume of The History of Sexuality in 1976, and together with McIntosh’s essay his “*The Perverse Implantation*” formed the double origin of social constructionism’s challenge to essentialism (Stein 1990:6. Stein includes Foucault’s essay as the second chapter of Forms of Desire). Foucault saw the proliferation of discourses, and the very “transformation of sex into discourse” as an “endeavour to expel from reality the forms of sexuality that were not amendable to the strict economy of reproduction”, to “banish casual pleasures”, or to reduce and exclude practices “whose object was not procreation” (Foucault 1990:11). The various discourses multiplied legal sanctions against minor perversions; “sexual irregularity was annexed to mental illness”, a “norm of sexual development was defined and all possible deviations were carefully described”, while moralists, “especially doctors brandished the whole emphatic vocabulary of abomination” (Foucault 1990:11). This attention to sexuality was rooted in capitalist concerns, according to Foucault:

All this garrulous attention which has us in a stew over sexuality, is it not motivated by one basic concern: to ensure population, to reproduce labour capacity, to perpetuate the form of social relations: in short, to constitute a sexuality that is economically useful and politically conservative. (Foucault 1990:11)

Foucault regards the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as the epoch that “has initiated sexual heterogeneities” or a “multiple implantation of perversions” (Foucault 1992:12). The three main codes governing sexual practices up to the end of the eighteenth century were “canonical law, the Christian pastoral, and civil law” (Foucault 1990:12). These codes centred on matrimonial relations, as the “sex of husband wife was beset with rules and recommendations” (Foucault 1990:12). Other sexual activity “remained a good deal more confused: one only has to think of the uncertain status of ‘sodomy’, or the indifference regarding the sexuality of children” (Foucault 1990:12). To break the rules of marriage brought equal condemnation to “seeking strange pleasures”, and a general unlawfulness was taken into account by civil and religious jurisdictions (Foucault 1992:12-13). Sexual prohibitions were based on the “nature” or “order of things”, which criminalised hermaphrodites for confounding “the law that distinguished the sexes and prescribed their union” (Foucault 1990:13). Two modifications occurred at the “discursive explosion” of the nineteenth century: the monogamous heterosexual couple was spoken of less, while all other sexual forms were focused on:

The legitimate couple, with its regular sexuality, had a right to more discretion...On the other hand, what came under scrutiny was the sexuality of children, mad men, women, and criminals; the sensuality of those who did not like the opposite sex; reveries, obsessions, petty manias or great transports of rage. It was time for all these figures, scarcely noticed in the past, to step forward and speak, to make the difficult confession of what they were. No doubt they were condemned all the same... (Foucault 1990:13)

The management of sexualities was not so much characterised by repression and prohibition, as by the powers of medicine and regimentation, which penetrated reality in expanding lines and branches, rather than a barrier system (Foucault 1990:17). The “new persecution of peripheral sexualities entailed an incorporation of perversions and a new specification of individuals” (Foucault 1990:17). In the civil and canonical codes preceding the nineteenth-century, “sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the judicial subject to them” (Foucault 1990:17). Subsequently the homosexual became a “personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology” (Foucault 1990:17). The homosexual was no longer a habitual sinner, but a singular nature (Foucault 1990:17), who was conceived with the term:

We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterised - Westphal's famous article of 1870 on “contrary sensations” can stand as its date of birth - less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and feminine in oneself. Homosexuality when it was transported from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species. (Foucault 1990:17-18)

Foucault regards the attempt to “free” gay people through self-identification as another form of control, and “sexual liberation becomes not the rejoinder to repression, but a form of its extension” (Sullivan 1995:65). Sex itself is also regarded as “controlled by the machinery of power”, as there is “no orgasm without ideology” (Halperin quoted in Sullivan 1990:65). Sullivan convincingly argues that Foucault strikes a chord with his insight that “the way we structure our thoughts changes the thoughts themselves. The “hidden premises by which we understand the world” are illuminated by Foucault, when he argues that the confessional mode of sex has remained dominant, “from the medieval confessional to Penthouse Forum”. Foucault also demystifies “our culture's obsession with sex”, and causes a questioning of why sexual desire -

once regarded as madness, or a nameless, obscure urge - should form the basis of identity. The conclusions of science and psychology, that nature plays a part in “forging homosexual orientation”, are regarded as irrelevant, as they are further discourses or ideologies. Despite the positive aspects of Foucault’s arguments; Sullivan writes that “history itself, the very discourse of the past, concurs with science and psychology to suggest the presence of what we would understand as the homosexual, in all times and places”. Sullivan then proceeds to illustrate two pages with historical and literary examples that convincingly connect the human experience of homosexuality from ancient to modern times (see Sullivan 1995:65-71).

Rictor Norton in The Myth of the Modern Homosexual (1997) presents similar evidence, that shows a continuity in history of homosexuals and queer culture. Unfortunately limited space does not allow for the discussion of the plentiful fascinating examples. In his introductory chapter “*The Search for Cultural Unity*” Norton traces the study of American gay history, and agrees with the early gay liberationists that “knowledge of history plays an important role in the development of solidarity: a consciousness of cultural community provides the necessary strength for collective action to overcome oppression” (Norton 1997:3). In earlier “homophile” activities the ONE Institute opened in Los Angeles in 1956 and “offered a course on Homosexuality in History in 1957” (Norton 1997:4). The studies on homophile movements in Europe in 1958-1959 “included visiting lectures by men who personally knew Magnus Hirschfeld (Norton 1997:4). The state education authority licensed the ONE Institute Graduate School ‘to offer courses leading to accredited Master of Arts and Doctor of philosophy degrees in Homophile Studies’ in 1984. Social constructionist historians dismissed the activities and publications of ONE Inc., and John D’Emile claimed that the term “gay history” was a term not yet “invented” when he entered graduate school in 1971 (Norton 1997:4). Norton points-out that “homophile history existed as a term since the 1950s, and as a concept since the 1970s” (Norton 1997:4). This illustrates the tensions between the West and East Coast schools of constructionism versus essentialism:

There is a New York versus California element in gay politics, New York being the base for ‘progressive’ politically based social constructionism, and California representing the more personal, developmental, cultural ‘lifestyle’ and New Age essentialism, much satirised by the New

York set with its greater access to publishing power bases and the media. In re-writing the history of the homophile emancipation movement, the New York branch of gay liberation has attempted to reserve credit for itself. In response, Dorr Legg's book (1994) attempts to set the record straight, and certainly establishes the fact that that an enormous cultural educational programme existed some fifteen years before the supposed 'birth' of gay liberation in 1969 in New York's Stonewall riots. (Norton 1997:4-5)

Harry Hay promoted the concept of a homosexual minority since 1948, and despite being a member of the communist party, took the "essentialist approach, emphasising the importance of cross-cultural unity in variety" (Norton 1997:5). In 1950 under Hay's guidance the *Mattachine Society Mission and Purposes* stated that "it was possible that a highly ethical homosexual culture emerge as a consequence of its work, paralleling the emerging cultures of our fellow minorities - the Negro, Mexican and Jewish peoples" (Hay quoted in Norton 1997:5). Norton rejects as a fallacy the "view that a minority culture has to make a contribution to its 'parent' culture" (Norton 1997:5). Although these minority cultures may be "dominated and oppressed by white Anglo-Saxon Protestant society", they nevertheless have their own culture and history - they are not "offsprings of a white 'parent' culture" (Norton 1997:5). Like other oppressed minorities, queers draw strength, distinction and history from their culture (Norton 1997:6).

By social constructionism Norton means the dogma that has dominated discussions of gay history with "alleged 'constructs' of sex, gender, race and class" (Norton 1997:6). He lists some familiar constructionists, like Mary McIntosh, Jeffrey Weeks, Kenneth Plummer and Michel Foucault. Norton argues that the foundation of social constructionist theory is Marxist, although it may obscure this:

The school is sometimes called 'cultural constructivism', which hides its political agenda; their 'history' invariably focuses upon the nineteenth century, the era of bourgeois capitalism capable of being subjected to Marxist/Maoist economic analysis. Jeffrey Weeks was a founding member of the Gay Left collective, refugees from the collapsed Marxist Group, whose magazine was published twice a year during the mid to late 1970s with the aim of disseminating socialist theory vis-à-vis gay

oppression; he later became the editor of the radical history workshop...When these theorists talk about 'social constructs' they are referring specifically to the ideologies constructed by bourgeois society in order to control the working classes. Towards the 1980s much of this political agenda was hidden behind some very sophisticated theorising, but these are the bare bones that are fairly easy to read between the lines. (Norton 1997:7)

The political theory of social constructionists is based on the dialectics of revolution, and their position therefore maintains that significant shifts took place in the nineteenth century (Norton 1997:7). The aim of using the term "modern homosexual" by constructionists, is part of their class analysis according to Norton:

By defining the 'homosexual' as 'the modern homosexual the social constructionists are able to redefine the modern homosexual, who merely has 'class *awareness*', as the politicised homosexual, whose class '*consciousness*' enables him or her to radically question such concepts as gender. The aim is to fight the class war so that 'homosexuals' (and 'men' and 'women') disappear as a class. (Norton 1997:7)

Norton has sympathy with the view that the construct of heteropatriarchy is subjugating women, but he prefers the lesbi-feminist position, that deconstructs the "political institution" of "compulsory heterosexuality" rather than the naturalness of lesbianism (Norton 1997:7).

As has been previously noted, the point of emergence of the "homosexual role", is the most crucial, yet weakest part of the constructionist project. Norton writes:

The class war is an essential feature of social constructionist theory - if historical evidence can be produced which establishes the existence of the homosexual role and identity before capitalism, then the materialist theory starts to collapse. The dating of the emergence of the queer subculture, though crucial to the theory is its weakest part. (Norton 1997:7)

Norton regards the task of establishing “that most of the sexual categories which are supposed to have arisen under modern capitalism in fact existed much earlier” as an easy, yet crucial “branch of demolition” for historians (Norton 1997:7). This is because the “nineteenth century date is one of the major props of social constructionism, without which its economic/control analysis of homosexuality becomes meaningless” (Norton 1997:7). The existence of pre-1800 constructs “tend to undermine Foucault’s theories about the ‘ruptures’ between the ‘epistemes’ of the Classical period and the Modern Period” (Norton 1997:8).

According to Norton political correctness has relegated “gay history” to the recent gay emancipation movement. But this movement must be placed into “its proper historical perspective” by reverting to the principles of “queer history” (Norton 1997:8). Norton is arguing here that the term *queer* history gives a sense of continuity to the homosexual experience. This continuity has been fractured by social constructionism:

Jeffrey Weeks (1991) and other social constructionists have stressed ‘the vital importance of distinguishing between behaviour, role, and identity in any sociological or historical approach to the topic of homosexuality’. On the contrary I believe it is vital to recognise the integrity, unity and ambiguity of the experience that is falsified by over-intellectual analysis. (Norton 1997:8)

Although Norton regards the terms “gay and lesbian” as perfectly acceptable since the 1960s, it is the earlier past that interests him. The terms queer, faggot, dyke and gay are meant to subsume words like homophile, homosexual and homoerotic - as the former more accurately reflect the working-class reality that formed gay (sub)cultures, whose authenticity middle-class gays began denying in the 1950s and 1960s (Norton 1997:8). Norton deduces that past terms of abuse, like molly and sapphist, or sodomite and tribate, have “queer” as their most accurate modern equivalent (in the nineteenth century “homosexual” was similarly equivalent to “queer” (Norton 1997: 8-9). Because pre-1869 terms like “faggot” or “queen” are unpleasant, contemporary theorists fail to recognise them as referring to homosexuals when they encounter them in historical texts (Norton 1997:8). Although Norton claims that he would hesitate to call certain pre-1869 homosexuals “gay”, he would happily call them “queer or even silly old queens”, which are indistinguishable from the

queens he has known since the 1960s (Norton 1997:8). Norton's emphasis is therefore on "ethnic autonomy" instead of assimilation, and he recognises the modern implication of using this term: "'Queer' was the word of preference for homosexuals as well as homophobes for the first half of the twentieth century, and of course is being reclaimed today in defiant rather than defensive postures" (Norton 1997:8).

Norton regards social constructionism as being re-quoted among colleagues, rather than being supported by scholarly research. Its approach is therefore totalitarian in its singular methodology, and decisions on what the relevant questions are (Norton 1997:9). Social constructionist history is regarded as a contradiction, because "experience" is redefined as a product of discourse, "so 'evidence' itself is regarded as a social construct" (Scott [1993] quoted in Norton 1997:9). Norton quotes opinions on Foucault, which are dismissive to the point of insult. Camille Paglia refers to Foucault as a "glib game-player who took very little research a long way" (Paglia quoted in Norton 1997:10). Paglia labels leftists as "careless", "slothful" and "unprofessional", and she proposes to the "gay world": "Get rid of dead abstract 'theory' and rabid social constructionism, the limp legacy of academic know-nothings" (Paglia (1994) quoted in Norton 1997:10). Historians with some constructionist leanings, like Greenberg (1988) and Spencer (1995) also refute the notion that the homosexual as a species only originated at the end of the 1800s. Greenberg accuses Foucault of simply imposing a "new hegemonic discourse on passive recipients" (Greenberg quoted in Norton 1997:10). This view would be warranted; ironically by Foucault's own arguments. By referring to an analogy between the construction of homosexuality and Anthony Julius's criticism of Jewish identity as a construction, Norton describes what happens when "our most private is itself a construct" (Norton 1997:10). The core of this argument, when applied to homosexuals states that: if all homosexuality is constructed, then "fictional" and "real" homosexuals occupy the same representational space - hence homosexuals can never claim to be persecuted by misrepresentation (Norton 1997:10). This is a valuable point, and explains the contradictions of McIntosh's *"The Homosexual Role"* in which she claims that the modern homosexual role is widely different from historical homosexual behaviour. She has no concrete definition or representation of modern or historical homosexuals. She cannot as these are constructions, not definable types, which makes her very use of the term "homosexual" ironic. Because these constructions are not "real" they overlap, paradoxically showing that homosexual roles are similar (see Norton 1997:18). It

would also be difficult to write back to The Pink Agenda, since their stereotyped construction of homosexuals as diseased paedophiles is just as valid as any other construction. As types of people however, homosexuals could claim to be misrepresented, since we could claim that the overall stereotype created by the American religious right represents neither our own lives and behaviour, nor that of the other homosexuals we know. This book after-all, places a whole range of mental illnesses, sexually transmitted diseases and respective fetishes on homosexuals, that are generally few and far between - as they are for heterosexuals - and uses selective statistics from specific contexts to show that all homosexuals are a health risk, while heterosexuals are almost immune in comparison. The “shockingly” low life expectancy of 42 for gay men (during the height of the AIDS crisis in American gay “ghettos”) seems ridiculous when one considers that the life expectancy for all South Africans is estimated at 47.8 (Hawthorne 2002:25). The irony is that when AIDS ravaged the United States gay community, the conservative administration of the 1980s refused to prevent it because of sheer homophobia. The Christian Right supported and influenced this attitude, and hailed AIDS as God’s punishment on homosexuals. The Pink Agenda blames the homosexuals for their high infection rate, yet they represent the very people who prevented research, education and support. Suicide, depression, loneliness, anal-oral contact, sado-masochism, violence and suicide do not characterise homosexual life, and their documentation in heterosexual lives (including Christian families) would fill volumes. Homosexuals can therefore claim to be misrepresented.

## **Chapter Five: Homosexuality in Africa**

Of all the areas studied, sub-Saharan Africa has been most noticeably absent from gay and lesbian studies. This has been true of the pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence period. The invisibility of African gay studies is due both to Western ideas of Africans, and to views of Africans about themselves. They often ignore tribal and cultural realities, and urban gay identities forming in post-tribal societies. The response elicited from African political leaders on the topic (with the exclusion of some South African leaders) is that homosexuality simply does not exist in black culture, and if so, only as a decadent, exploitative Western import. Fundamentalist Christians have eagerly included such statements in their anti-gay revisionist history, claiming that “historically it has never been a normal or accepted part of African or Western culture” (McCafferty and Hammond 2001:64). They also refer to the legal sanctions against sodomy in 29 countries, to prove it is unacceptable. However, the law does not always convey popular or minority sentiment (as the authors should know, since they claim that legalised homosexuality in South Africa is not wanted by the majority) neither is it always applied, especially when it limits gayness to a penetrative act. It is also noteworthy how they distance themselves from homophobes that are not liked by the white Christian community - they could well have quoted Robert Mugabe. While praising African “culture” for its perceived homophobia, they are against several key aspects of it, like ancestor devotion, polygamy and “witchcraft”. Paul Gifford points-out in The New Crusaders: Christianity and the New Right in Southern Africa (1991) that American re-born Christianity supported the apartheid regime by preaching compliance locally and producing pro-Botha propaganda abroad (Gifford 1991:35). They (Rhema, Pat Robertson, Kenneth Copeland, Jimmy Swaggert, Reinhard Bonnke) referred to the ANC leadership as a few misguided communists, and labelled religious activists like Tutu, Boesak, Naudé and Hurley as Marxist “liberation theologians” (the American homophobe and Fundamentalist leader Jerry Fallwell referred to then Bishop Tutu as a “phoney”) (Gifford 1991:34). Not surprisingly a group of concerned black evangelists wrote in 1986 that “most evangelical groupings with their narrow view of life and fundamentalistic approach to the Bible, tend to uncritically support existing oppressive regimes” and this tendency “ends up more on the side of the devil rather than on the side of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gifford 1991:26). It is not surprising that the

ANC does not take Fundamentalist views as relevant. While gay anti-apartheid activists, such as Simon Nkoli took considerable risks; Fundamentalists met homeland leaders and Pretoria's ministers, fought sanctions abroad with references to a "beautiful South Africa" and placated whites with the "prosperity gospel", while ignoring the dire need in the townships (Gifford 1991:26-45, 58-60). Although less visible, there is no reason to believe that the mix of religion and American right-wing political interests has abated. The recently introduced to South African satellite television *Trinity Broadcasting Network* (TBN) openly shows an aggressively right-wing slant, that paints the United States as God's chosen country. Programmes like *Zola Levitt* feature ex-Jews and ex-Muslims, and the latter describe their former religion as the personification of evil. The Pink Agenda's authors align themselves with this political world-view, and a look at their footnotes shows that much of their material has been inspired by similar American texts. Although they simply present their text as "Christian", the cartoon on page 143 shows the "religious right" being stoned by the "agnostic left". It is quite clear that the authors associate themselves with the American religious right, which regards itself as "tolerant" victims of intolerant leftists. While the Fundamentalists remained "unpolitical" under apartheid, they now portray themselves as political activists, and describe the liberal pressure, that forced gay rights on an unwilling ANC (McCafferty and Hammond 2001:66-67). That their own documented history of not "knowing right from wrong" has made them redundant seems not to have occurred to them (neither are they in any sense a majority, as the limited votes for the *African Christian Democratic Party* (the ACDP) demonstrate). Since they are so good at citing suspect statistics, perhaps a percentage of their support base would be interesting. Their other political views, such as unconditional support for Israel (the creation of which is "Biblical prophesy" according to their "literal" interpretation of scripture), their demonisation of Muslims and other religions, and their solicitation of enormous funds from the poor without any visible reinvestment in them (see Steele (1984) Plundering Hell: The Reinhard Bonnke Story) would shock most Africans. Any reference to African culture by re-born Fundamentalists is therefore the height of hypocrisy and political opportunism. The public should be made aware of the fact that anyone who supports their stance on homosexuality associates themselves with all their political attitudes; including an aggressive American foreign policy; "righteous indignation" at any sympathetic media coverage of the Palestinian cause, a sanitised history of Christianity and America, a

representation of all other religions as false, the repealing of pro-choice laws for women and the end of all “special” minority rights; like Native American water rights (see Gifford 1988:6-7).

Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe demonstrate in their collection of anthropological studies Boy Wives and Female Husbands (1998), that far from being absent from African culture, censure of homosexuality was rare, and all three models of homosexuality are represented in various societies. These are important points as African homophobia has been used as a populist tactic by repressive regimes. Murray and Roscoe write in their preface titled “*All very confusing*” that heterosexist notions of African super-heterosexism are linked to ideas of the primitive Other encountered by early European explorers:

Among the many myths Europeans have created about Africa, the myth that homosexuality is absent or incidental in African societies is one of the oldest and most enduring. For Europeans black Africans - of all the native people of the world - most epitomised “primitive man”. Since primitive man was supposed to be close to nature, ruled by instinct, and culturally unsophisticated, he had to be heterosexual, his sexual energies and outlets devoted exclusively to their “natural” purpose: biological reproduction. If black Africans were the most primitive people in all humanity - if they were indeed human, which some debated - then they had to be the most heterosexual. (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xi)

“Primitive man” has been valued differently; from the monstrous medieval sylvan “wild man”, to the idealised “noble-savage” of Rousseau (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xi). The purpose of the primitive Other is however vital to the definition of the “civilised”:

But in all cases the primitive serves the same function: to highlight that which distinguishes Western cultures by describing that which is not Western. Savagery proves indispensable to civilisation as does primitivism to progress, childhood to adulthood, deviancy to normalcy. Ultimately, every social difference that subdivides Western societies - ethnic, racial, national, and not the least sexual - has been mapped on the ambidextrous body of primitive man. (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xi)

Edward Gibbons began the sexualisation of African “primitive” man in the ninety-fourth chapter of his History and the Fall of the Roman Empire (1781), in which he states his “belief” and “hope” that negroes are “exempt from this moral pestilence (i.e. homosexual vice)” (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xii). Gibbons’s view was supported a century later by Sir Richard Burton, “who had observed homosexual practices first-hand in the Near East and south Asia”, but the “boundaries of his so-called sodatic zone, that region where homosexuality was presumably indigenous, did not extend south of the Sahara in Africa (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xii). When “sodomy” was recognised as occurring in Africa it was claimed to have been introduced by Arab slave-traders, Europeans or other African groups (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xii). Later studies supported the myth of the heterosexual African by not recognising gay behaviour, ignoring it or censoring their accounts:

Unfortunately, rather than dispel the myth of African exceptionalism, anthropologists have often reinforced it by not seriously investigating same-sex patterns, failing to report what they do observe, and discounting what they report. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, one of the most widely respected authorities on African cultures, said nothing about male homosexuality in his classic 1937 study, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Zande*...Decades passed from the time of his fieldwork until he finally reported what he had learned about male homosexuality among the once fierce Azande of the northern Congo. In 1957, in a relatively obscure journal, and then in more accessible venues in 1970 and 1971, he related how Azande warriors routinely married boys who functioned as temporary wives... This instance of age-stratified homosexuality ... had already lapsed by the time of Evans-Pritchard’s fieldwork in the 1930’s, although it was still remembered. The scope of these practices might be entirely unknown today had Evans-Pritchard not decided to finally write about them shortly before his death. (Murray and Roscoe 1998: xii-xiii)

Some anthropologists have both simultaneously dismissed and observed homosexuality. Roscoe and Murray point-out that in 1971 Alan Miriam “in one sentence stated that homosexual behaviour was absent

among Bala men and in the next reported native claims that the kitesha, a gender-defined social role, is a 'homosexual'" (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xiii). In studies that acknowledged homosexuality "its meaning and cultural significance are discounted and minimised" (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xiii). The authors expand on how homosexual desire was obliterated, or obscured in anthropological texts:

By claiming that homosexual relations are solely due to the lack of women, for example, or are part of a short-lived adolescent phase, the possibility of homoerotic desire - that an individual may actually want and find pleasure in another of the same sex - is effectively denied. In the 1930's, Herskovits asserted that homosexuality among Dahomey youths was merely situational and opportunistic...Yet in the immediately following sentence he reported, "Sometimes an affair of this sort persists during the entire life of the pair". (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xiii)

The blame for this state of affairs should however not solely rest on the shoulders of anthropologist authors. The oxymoronic contradictions in texts such as Herskovits's, shows a tension between what the author wants to report, and of how this may be received by a homophobic audience.

The task of even conscientious anthropologists was, and sometimes still is, daunting, as research depends on the "approval and material support of political authorities - originally those of the colonial powers, and today those of both Western and African states" (William and Roscoe 1998:xiv). As some African governments are overtly homophobic in their policies and attitudes, the fear of offending the rulers often prevents anthropologists from focusing on sexuality (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xiv). Ethnographer-informant relations are often fraught with tension, due to "the close identification of anthropologists with political authorities" (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xiv). That "native denials of homosexuality should be regarded sceptically", is illustrated by the experience of Brian MacDermont among the Ethiopian Nuer in the 1960's (cited in Murray and Roscoe 1998:xiv). After being informed that the Nuer did not practise homosexuality (which was apparently punishable by death), he discovered an old man who had married a man, wore female attire and performed female tasks. This was acceptable because a prophet had declared him to be a woman, after the spirits had been consulted. Understandably MacDermont concluded that this

was “all very confusing” (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xv). The variety of African same sex behaviour can indeed be confusing, as even the “enlightened” Western anthropologist comes from a culture that stigmatised or ignored homosexuality for centuries. Applying the fixed model of Western homosexuality to other cultures further obscures the topic, as Murray and Roscoe elaborate:

For individuals from a society in which homosexuality is defined as a unitary, predominantly sexual phenomenon with fixed internal psychological motivations - and who have judged that phenomenon so harshly that even its leading social engineers and intellectuals are afraid to study or discuss the subject - the diversity of African homosexualities is, indeed all very “confusing.” But as this volume shows, African homosexuality is neither random nor incidental - it is a consistent and logical feature of African societies and belief systems.” (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xv)

The above view may come as a surprise to readers accustomed to the public rhetoric on homosexuality and African cultures. Currently “the belief that homosexuality is a decadent, bourgeois, Western import has become common” among African communities, intellectuals and leaders (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xv). Ironically this is especially the case where Western influences, like Marxism, have been notable (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xv). This phenomenon is explained as a simultaneous resentment of colonial exploitation, and an adoption of colonial ideals:

Sensitised by missionaries and Western education, defensive in the face of stereotypes of black hypersexuality, and resentful of sexual exploitation in colonial institutions, the first generation of post-colonial Africans was extremely reluctant to discuss the subject of homosexuality. For most, the negotiations of African identity remained tied to European standards of morality. In seeking to replace a “genuinely perverse” with a “genuinely normal” Other, they drew on the same rhetoric employed in the colonial discourse on native sexuality...As the medical model of homosexuality was being abandoned in the West, it was adopted in the developing world. (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xvi)

The view that homosexuality was non-existent in African culture does not only enjoy the support of several African leaders (that are often also dictators), but it is also espoused by individuals in the African Diaspora:

In the United States, where Afrocentrism - the movement among Americans of African descent to construct and embrace African history, customs, and values - has become influential, questions of what "tradition" does and does not do have become highly politicised. In 1990, a member of the rap group Public Enemy asserted, "There's not a word in any African language which describes homosexual. If you want to take me up on that, then you find me in the original language of Africa, a word for homosexual, lesbian or prostitute. There are no such words. They didn't exist". (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xvi)

As the studies of various homosexualities in respective African societies in Murray and Roscoe's collection demonstrate, homosexuality only became stigmatised out of existence after African culture had been destroyed to the extent where it could be reinvented, according to adopted Western concepts of morality. This point is succinctly summarised and expanded on:

What began as denial has ended in taboo on the subject of African homosexualities - a taboo nonetheless based on European, not African, morality. The colonists did not introduce homosexuality to Africa but rather intolerance of it - and systems of surveillance and regulation for suppressing it...these systems were not successful as long as the reaction of the colonised was simply to hide or deny such practices. Only when native people began to forget that same-sex patterns were part of their culture did homosexuality become truly stigmatised. (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xvi)

The changing focus on African societies by Western anthropologists also plays a role in attitudes towards homosexuality. The Victorian "rhetoric of savagery" was replaced by functionalism, which "emphasised the

arranged, without taking the boy's willingness or sexual preference (a foreign concept according to Murray and Roscoe) into account. This should shock the Westerner as little as "arranged marriages for adolescent girls with older men shocks us" (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xviii). The meaning of such relationships also varied, from deep bonds of love to a type of slavery. Murray and Roscoe remind the reader that where there is power, there are forms of undermining it and resistance to domination - especially in sexually oppressive systems (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xviii). Furthermore, there is little doubt that sexual attraction was sometimes mutual, as is pointed-out in a statement that would shock the authors of The Pink Agenda, as it discounts the argument that younger homosexual partners are always exploited victims:

We cannot assume that African boys any more than girls and women were passive victims of social forces. Indeed, some young people of both sexes actively seek relationships with older adults. The black South African activist Zackie Achmat entitled his 1995 memoir "My Childhood as an Adult Molester". (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xviii)

The inter-generational model of homosexuality is only one of diverse homosexual practises throughout Africa, and not stressing this would lead to a new "myth of African unity - a single, consistent homosexuality across a culturally homogenous continent" (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xviii). All three broad categories of homosexualities are represented in Africa: egalitarian, age-based and gender-based (Murray and Roscoe 1998:6-9). Added to this are the non-traditional, urban homosexualities that may contain mixtures of all three models, similar to the contemporary Western gay community, although this falls outside the scope of Boy Wives and Female Husbands and would make for interesting future research.

In a position of cultural relativism, it should be pointed-out that the diversity of African models is not entirely absent from Western models. Although abusive relationships and paedophilia are not acceptable, it would be misleading to view non-Western gays as diverse, and Western gays as uniform. LeVay writes that psychological research on gays and lesbians offers "some support for the idea that homosexuality is part of a package of sex-transposed traits", and that other sex-atypical traits await "scientific investigation - empathy in gay men, leadership qualities in lesbians, and so on, and that together these traits powerfully influence

integration, morality and coherence of African society” (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xviii). In the current post-colonial period “Africans are portrayed as emerging from stable social systems into a state of cultural disruption no longer ‘African’ nor fully European” (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xviii). The collapse of tribal order is regarded as giving rise to new immoralities, which according to many, especially non-anthropologists, includes homosexuality (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xviii).

Murray and Roscoe write that understanding African homosexualities not only requires the suspension of the heterosexist myths on African cultures, but also of certain deeply held Western beliefs and values concerning sexuality, concepts of “love”, and personal relationships (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xviii). What the authors seem to be arguing is that Westerners should not judge African cultures on modern “ideals of voluntary marriage based on mutual choice, sexual attraction and monogamy” (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xviii). Even in Western cultures such relationships were not available for most individuals before the past century (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xviii). Considering the sexual, emotional and physical abuse in Western relationships, and the economic, social and psychological factors that actually cement them, egalitarian attachments based on “love” are still not available to many, especially heterosexual women, in contemporary society. Murray and Roscoe point-out that feminism changed the Western attitude to relationships, and they are currently, at least in their ideal form, expected to be voluntary and egalitarian:

For a growing number of Western women, the key to voluntary and mutual relationships with men has become the attainment of economic and legal independence from them. As these ideals have been more widely adopted, attempts to police the borders between voluntary and involuntary sexuality have become increasingly fine-tuned. Relationships between individuals of unequal status (between a more powerful man and a woman employee, for example, or an older man and a teenage boy) have become increasingly suspect. (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xviii)

In non-Western societies where arranged marriages may prevail, “not only persons and girls but also boys and persons lack choices that are taken for granted in contemporary Western societies” (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xvii-xviii). In some African cultures relationships between adolescent boys and older men were

career choices, public image, and self-image of lesbians and gay men (LeVay 1996:161). Because it seems that some “sex-linked traits are not shifted in homosexual men and women”, the “combination of sex-typical and sex-atypical characteristics may give gays and lesbians a claim to Ulrichs’s and Hirschfeld’s ‘third gender’” (LeVay 1996:161). LeVay points-out three caveats to psychological research concerning homosexuality and gender. The first is the impossibility of establishing prenatal brain differentiation from responses to socialisation in adult gays and lesbians. The other two caveats demonstrate the relevance of cross-cultural studies and the lack of research on Western homosexual diversity:

Second, many of the findings need to be replicated in cross-cultural studies to see whether they have universal validity or whether perhaps they result from peculiarities of the way gays and lesbians are reared in the United States or Westernised countries generally. The third limitation of the research that has been done so far is that it has generally treated gays and lesbians as uniform groups, with little concern for differences within each group. This kind of simplification is inevitable and necessary in a new field of study. But there are obvious gender distinctions within the populations of lesbians and gay men - the butch and femme lesbians, the straight acting and “queeny” gay men, and probably many variations on these. Until cognitive psychology has told us something about this kind of diversity, it will not have explained homosexuality or even have drawn a persuasive likeness of it. (LeVay 1996:161)

Cross-cultural and anthropological studies have relevance for the constructionist and essentialist debate, although it is debatable which argument they support. Murray and Roscoe mention that fruitful studies have recently been inspired by constructionism, yet the ubiquitous aspects of homosexuality also support essentialist arguments:

Recent work by Gil Herdt on homosexuality in Melanesian initiations, Will Roscoe on the North American berdache, Stephen Murray and Annick Prieur on Mesoamerica, Kira Hall and Serena Nanda on the *hijras* of India, and Alison Murray and Saskia Wieringa on Indonesia reveal how

productive the social constructionist paradigm is when applied to the analysis of non-Western homosexuality. At the same time, these studies have raised some important challenges to certain assumptions often made by constructionist theorists. Although the homosexual patterns of Western and non-Western societies are distinct, this diversity is not infinite. It has become apparent that certain patterns tend to recur across cultures and historical periods. Anthropological research on homosexuality raises the question, exactly what social and historical factors explain both the occurrence of different same-sex patterns and the regularity within these patterns. (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xxi)

Murray and Roscoe regard Michel Foucault and Jeffrey Weeks as unfortunately ethnocentric, as these constructionists concentrate on recent Western societies (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xxi). Only occasionally “contemporary sexual identities are contrasted to those of “tribal” societies - usually those of native North America, whose berdache or alternative gender role has been well documented” (Murray and Roscoe 1998:xxi).

In South Africa, black gays during apartheid could be described as especially doubly oppressed; both by racial oppression and by black homophobia. In the 1980s organisations such as the *Gay Association of South Africa* (Gasa) largely served the white middle-class, who sought to join an international gay rights movement (Gevisser 1994:45). In an attempt to gain legal reform by behaviour meant to appeal to the Nationalist government, it avoided politics at a time when this was impossible, and was therefore “ousted from the world gay movement and destabilised by a growing anti-apartheid and black gay movement within South Africa” (Gevisser 1994:63). Black consciousness and other African liberationists regarded homosexuality as an un-African colonial import, as Gevisser writes:

According to this strain of nationalism, homosexuality has been imported into black communities by an inhuman labour system, perverse priests, and white gay activists looking to expand their constituency and the validity of their cause. This ideology has its roots in the patriarchal notion that

colonialism emasculated and feminised the black man, and therefore located much of black power, quite bluntly, in the penis: in a remasculisation or assertion of black virility. (Gevisser 1994:69)

This ideology had “serious consequences for gender politics and sexuality within liberation movements”, as Mark Gevisser writes:

Not only does it find homosexuality untenable (the image of the effeminate, limb-wristed “stabane” - a man who wants to be a woman - is obviously threatening), but it also negates the possibilities of female resistance and liberation, relegating women to the roles of mothers and wives of comrades rather than allowing them to be comrades themselves. (Gevisser 1994:70)

Despite such attitudes, homosexuality has been reported in Drum magazine since the 1950s, describing subcultures in townships such as Esinmayeni, Cato Manor and in the Western Cape (Gevisser 1994:72). Lesbian relationships have been recorded amongst the Lovedu, rural sangomas and the Basotho by anthropologists (Gevisser 1994:72). Gay Africanists reject the concept that homosexuality is un-African, and maintain that censure of homosexuality is a colonial import brought by the missionaries (Gevisser 1994:73).

Left-wing labour historiography regarded homosexual activity in mining hostels as a result of the migrant labour system (Gevisser 1994:71). Black consciousness writer James Matthews demonstrates this sentiment in his poem “Can the white man speak for me?” He asks the rhetorical question aimed at white liberals:

is he with me in the loneliness  
of my bed in the bachelor barracks  
with the longing driving me to mount my brother?

(Matthews cited in Shava 1989:112)

Yet research shows that homosexual activity on the mines often occurred between consenting partners, and was even preferred to heterosexual sex. Mpande wa Sibuye interviewed a mine labourer called Philemon in

1987 (Sibuye 1993:54). Philemon dispels the myth that gay sex was only a replacement for “normal” sex: “Yes! For a fact I know that some men enjoyed penetrating the thighs more than they did the real thing!” (Sibuye 1993:54).

For anti-apartheid and gay activist Simon Nkoli both racial discrimination and homophobia were equally oppressing. The wardrobe in which, Nkoli as a child, hid his parents from the police looking for illegal squatters, becomes a symbol of black gay experience under apartheid:

If you are black in South Africa, the inhuman laws of apartheid closet you. If you are gay in South Africa, the homophobic laws and customs of this society closet you. If you are black and gay in South Africa, well, then it really is the same wardrobe, the same closet. Inside is darkness and oppression. Outside is freedom. (Nkoli 1994:250)

Nkoli helped change the homophobic attitudes of his fellow activists, during their imprisonment at the Delmas Treason Trial. Another struggle-era gay activist, Zackie Achmat exposes the oppression and cruelty of a community who are themselves oppressed, to the gay “Pieter Moffie” in his autobiographical “My childhood as an adult molester: A Salt River Moffie” (Achmat 1994:330). Achmat’s mother believed that only whites were truly gay, and that they sexually exploited the coloured “moffies”: “Jy kry nie ‘n bruin man of ‘n Native wat met Moffies rondgaan nie” (Achmat 1994:330). The young Achmat already identified himself as gay, and implies that the gay experience is one that is shared across apartheid’s colour lines: “Moffies are not coloured, black or white; moffies, Fika would say years later, are a different nation” (Achmat 1994:330). The interracial sex that Achmat indulged in at the Observatory Station toilets, became an act of defiance, and apartheid was “destroyed” in them, “by men who had sex with men, regardless of race or class” (Achmat 1994:334). Homosexual desire thus transcends apartheid, and the hidden site of sex becomes a space of equality. Achmat’s description can be interpreted to support essentialism, rather than social constructionism, both because of the young age at which he identifies as gay, and because of his reference to the concept of a gay “nation” - in which the gay experience is similar enough to connect people across races and cultures.

The myth of African hyperheterosexuality also continues in the mind of white South Africans, and even those who are more enlightened than the Pink Agenda type often think of gays as white, rich and educated. Only as people are increasingly mixing across colour lines are such stereotypes destroyed. Some whites are surprised when they encounter gays from different cultures, and even more so when a positive attitude towards homosexuals is espoused. Dina Joubert's autobiographical Onlogiese Liefde: Op Pad met my Gay Kind tells the tale of religious parents who, after the initial shock and concern, come to accept Gideon, their gay son. Joubert tells of an interesting and unsuspected reaction from a San (Bushman) woman to homosexuals:

Vir interessantheid wil ek net noem hoe die Boesman-samelewing gay-wees ervaar. Tydens Tu Ne Ku Tu (Die reën hy reent) se speelvak in Pretoria het die Boesman aktrise Dixhao, en ek elke aand na die vertoning iewers gaan ontlaai. Gewoonlik saam met Gideon se vriende. Onnosel wat ek is, het ek 'n Boesmanvrou totaal onderskat, want ek het haar vooraf deeglik daarop voorberei dat Gideon en meeste van sy vriende gay is. Min wetende dat dit vir haar hoegenaamd geen issue is nie. Een aand nooi David ons om na die tyd 'n draaijie te maak by ons gay - kerkkoor oefening. Met die inkomslag stel hy ons toe ook aan die "Moflem"-koor voor..."Ek het nog nooit in my hele lewe mense so mooi hoor sing nie," se Dixhao na die tyd en voeg by: "ek gaan net vir die Boesmans vertel dat apartheid nog nie klaar is in Suid-Afrika nie. Ek sien Gideon en sy vriende moet hulle aparte restaurant hê en mense meng nie met hulle nie. Hulle moet hulle eie kerk apart hou - die mense wat so mooi kan sing. Ons Boesman mense maak nie so nie. As daar by ons miskien 'n gay mens bly, stoot ons hom nie eenkant nie. My swaertjie Costilo is ook so, maar ons se: "Nqiriba het jou so gemaak. Dis nie 'n iets wat jy kan help nie." Ons sal partykeer vir Castilo bietjie om die vuur spot, maar dit is net speel. Ons wil nie hê hy moet buitekant voel nie. (Joubert 1998:62-63)

The San woman's identification of her cousin as being gay, like the narrator's son, again supports essentialism. Although there may be little scientific proof for essentialism as yet, more creative, personal accounts lean towards it. As can be seen from these literary examples homosexuality is not usually hugely

different across cultures. Homosexuality proves the commonality of human experience, although it is often stigmatised. It also shows that human nature is universal, despite long-held stereotypes and constructions of cultures.

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## **Chapter Six: In Conclusion: Reclaiming the Queer.**

It has now become clear that homosexuality is not limited to a small number of white men, which is an important point in contemporary Africa. As such the “Homitern” is expanded beyond the constructed homosexual identity of great literary figures of the indispensable, traditional “team” of which: “no eleven playing for the cause could do without Wilde, Strachy, Auden, Isherwood, or Orton” (Higgins 1993:287). The term “Homitern” itself is a new contribution to English from this “A-Team” of homosexual writers:

The word Homitern, which I coined in 1939, is attributed to Auden, who passed it in an article in the *Parisian Review* about 1941, and has passed into language. A takeoff on Comitern (Communist International), it was meant to convey the idea of a global homosexual community. (Norse in Higgins 1993:287)

For contemporary gay culture, the knowledge and awareness of such notable figures, that are in a sense canonised in collections such as Higgins’s *Queer Reader* (1993), remain a link to a queer communal experience. Queer is here meant to imply a sense of ethnic nationhood, a link to a global and historical community; that defies “homo” as gendered, or “homo” as the same, or “gay” as an attempt at de-prejudicing a group against whom prejudice has been aimed. Queer holds within it the Homitern, the “moffie” teenager, the drag-queen, the despised Township “stabane”. In De Waal’s *Jack Marks*, it is a book by artist David Hockney, a member of the Homitern, that forms a link between the troubled Justin and his homosexual art teacher, Mr Liebowitz. In an environment and era of silence on homosexuality, it forms a means of communication, that allows Justin to confess his sexuality to Mr Liebowitz, who dispenses limited yet valuable advice: “You have to be strong. Accept yourself as you are...and gradually other people will come to accept you too” (De Waal 198:49). In Johann De Lange’s collection *Akwarelle van die dors* (1991), the poet rewrites the past in a plausible re-interpretation of the poet Leipoldt. In the poems “Leipoldt I” and “Leipoldt II” De Lange gives Leipoldt the queer voice not available to him in the past. Joan Hambidge writes:

De Lange is waarskynlik 'n buikspreker vir Leipoldt se “closet” posisie. Deur hierdie twee gedigte gee hy stem aan die digter se onvermoë om sy seksualiteit openlik uit te leef.. (Hambidge: unpublished:16).

The exhibitionistic nature of these poems is tied to De Lange's “poetic father-figure” (Hambidge: unpublished:16). Leipoldt becomes a substitute for the poet's own missing father, and a link to a recognisable queer paradigm through his oppositional stance to the heterosexist Afrikaans establishment. In Jack Marks Mr Liebowitz, although himself weary and withdrawn in an oppressive establishment, where he cannot be “blatantly gay”, briefly becomes a father-figure to Justin. The biological father tries only to create another future father, and cannot recognise (or probably does not want to) his son as the artist and queer. This reading should not be confused with the parental blame theories, that blame homosexuality on weak, distant or otherwise inept fathers. It is rather a symptom of a heterosexist society, and it's avoiding tunnel-vision, which isolates and shuts-out the queer. Here, poets and writers create an essentialism that requires no biological basis. The artist is existentially free to choose his artistic historic fathers, without questioning whether “their homosexual role” was constructed or innate. Hockney, Justin and Mr Liebowitz are connected by queer experience through the fictional lens of this text. Similarly the queer experience allows a connection and insight between race and status in colonial literature, that is often facilitated through symbolic and psychic terms such as “futuraity”. This displaces the difficulty of incorporating homosexuality into texts by queer authors, when a racially and sexually prejudiced society censures this (Lane: 1995:155). The implied attraction between the coloniser and colonised in a novel by one of the Homitem's stalwarts - E.M. Forster's A Passage to India (1947) - procrastinates the problem of queer attraction to a future country:

“We shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea, and then” - [Aziz] rode against him furiously - “and then”, he concluded, half kissing him, “you and I shall be friends.” (Forster cited in Lane 1995:155-156)

Despite such queer connections across time and culture, queer society exhibits prejudices. Majorie Garber discusses “transvestite panic” or the fear of gay men that they may be coded or dismissed as effeminate, or “woman”. Garber writes:

This transvestitephobia from within the gay community reflects a deep division between the “macho”, “butch” and “effeminate”, “nelly” or “femme” that sometimes includes an uneasy intolerance of otherness within gay identity. This is a paradox: transvestism is said to be “about” gay identity and erotic style, but gay identity is not about transvestism, not “about men mimicking women”... (Garber 1992:137)

The gay culture’s struggling with all its energies against the AIDS virus and the massive bureaucratic indifference to this epidemic, increasingly presents images of “gay male health in T-shirt, tank top, and close-cropped hair and beards” in a masculine construction of queerness (Garber 1992:137). Yet political drag remains radical and valorised, as it was the transvestites who were most visible in the 1969 Stone Wall uprising (Garber 1992:159). What Garber also implies is that drag is often a fetish for straight transvestites, and a political statement for queers. It remains to be seen whether the masculine trend of the 1990s will continue.

Because of the AIDS epidemic and the social criticism of gay behaviour that gave Fundamentalists gleeful substance to condemn the “sodomites”, gay Western culture has moved from its camp expressions, and urban leather cultures, to greater assimilation. The growth of homosexual churches, institutionalised partnerships, and the quest for monogamy has been staggering. Simultaneously heterosexuals have been questioning the confines of their marriages through divorce, or concepts like “serial monogamy”. Biological straight “essentialism” attempts to explain this in claiming that the male is programmed to “sow his seed”. Yet the Fundamentalists somehow expect the queers to save the family by converting to heterosexual relationships. This dissertation has largely referred to a specific homophobia; that of a religious nature. Homophobes, in their passionate denouncement of homosexuals also show that there is something amiss

with themselves. Since the debate with Fundamentalists has now fully arrived in South Africa, queers should learn the nature of their foe. Although Fundamentalists claim that they are not homophobic, this term applies to them. They base their dislike of homosexuality on one possible Biblical interpretation, which associates Biblical historical practices, like temple prostitution, as analogous to modern queers. As such their attitude is based on supernatural superstition - a belief that a world outside Biblical "knowledge" is not possible. This is irrational - the very definition of a phobia. Nevertheless they are entitled to their opinions and one-sided view of the "badness" in homosexuality. The public should however become aware that they are not tolerant individuals, and certainly not the "victims" they claim to be. They have frequently employed tactics akin to "terror" on their ideological enemies. The documentary *Live Free or Die* shows how the religious right used character assassination, threats of murder and continual public hounding to isolate a pro-choice doctor from his community. The very separation of Church and State in the United States is practically threatened by the religious right. Fundamentalists are certainly not experienced as "Godly", "saintly" or nice by their targets. They have not explained why queers should lead blameless lives, or save the family (when Jesus himself was at best ambivalent to this unit, as he came to turn father and son against each other with a "holy sword" according to Matthew 10:34-38). Queers are part of families; and the danger of *The Pink Agenda* is that it will cause a rejection of queer family members. Their "ex-gay" ministries are a particular cause for concern. McCafferty and Hammond argue that queers first use essentialist arguments to gain sympathy, and then use constructionism to "redefine our society and the family" (Hammond and McCafferty 2001:50). This is supposed to create the impression of a calculated causal link, which will end in the collapse of civilisation. This is clearly not the case, as constructionism and essentialism have existed as a simultaneous debate. Even queer activists outside the academy are often unaware of the debate's existence. Constructionists such as Foucault actually questioned whether society has changed or can change, a prospect over which Foucault was pessimistic, since one ideology would simply replace another. *The Pink Agenda's* authors clearly misunderstand Foucault, when they quote him on pre-nineteenth century queers being "juridical subjects" (McCafferty and Hammond 2001:15). For constructionists all sexuality is constructed, and whether a particular attraction is desirable or not, depends on the specific cultural discourse. As a final irony, queers should enjoy equal opportunities for partnerships, civil rights, privacy or visibility, not because they are born

that way, but because a fair and successful democratic society consists of justice, equality and respect for individual decisions - the same reason that society should tolerate religious minorities (see Stein 1999:304). Although gays may very well be discovered by genetical science to be born with a queer gene, Stein argues that this would only justify their right to be queer. It would not provide an argument for rights ensuring equality in society. The very survival of civilisation depends on the diversity of the human experience, and far from destroying society, queers have vastly contributed to it - without queers there would be no Boy Scouts or Sistine Chapel. Without queers there would still be AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases and paedophilia. Queers have never destroyed a culture, but were in every culture. It was only when Western colonists arrived with the Bible, cross, musket and chain that the mass cultural genocide of the past 500 years began. In The Pink Agenda the authors claim that Christians put an end to practises like castration, but it was the Christians who subverted "natural" gender by introducing the "frock", the Castrati and castration as torture (Garber 1992:253-4, 212, compare with the claims in McCafferty and Hammond 2001:114). If Christians want to use history to prove Fundamentalism's inherent goodness, they will have to do a lot of explaining and ignoring. Queers can look to the Homitem, their cultural diversity and honesty, and their cultural eyes and ears for irony, to uncover hypocrisy and stand their ground.

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